

**PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION**

505 VAN NESS AVENUE  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3298



June 19, 2003

TO: PARTIES OF RECORD IN INVESTIGATION 01-08-029

This proceeding was filed on August 23, 2001, and is assigned to Commissioner Kennedy and Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) Econome. This is the decision of the Presiding Officer, ALJ Econome.

Any party to this adjudicatory proceeding may file and serve an Appeal of the Presiding Officer's Decision within 30 days of the date of issuance (i.e., the date of mailing) of this decision. In addition, any Commissioner may request review of the Presiding Officer's Decision by filing and serving a Request for Review within 30 days of the date of issuance.

Appeals and Requests for Review must set forth specifically the grounds on which the appellant or requestor believes the Presiding Officer's Decision to be unlawful or erroneous. The purpose of an Appeal or Request for Review is to alert the Commission to a potential error, so that the error may be corrected expeditiously by the Commission. Vague assertions as to the record or the law, without citation, may be accorded little weight.

Appeals and Requests for Review must be served on all parties and accompanied by a certificate of service. Any party may file and serve a Response to an Appeal or Request for Review no later than 15 days after the date the Appeal or Request for Review was filed. In cases of multiple Appeals or Requests for Review, the Response may be to all such filings and may be filed 15 days after the last such Appeal or Request for Review was filed. Replies to Responses are not permitted. (See, generally, Rule 8.2 of the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure.)

If no Appeal or Request for Review is filed within 30 days of the date of issuance of the Presiding Officer's Decision, the decision shall become the decision of the Commission. In this event, the Commission will designate a decision number and advise the parties by letter that the Presiding Officer's Decision has become the Commission's decision.

/s/ ANGELA K. MINKIN  
Angela K. Minkin, Chief  
Administrative Law Judge

ANG:tcg

I.01-08-029 ALJ/JJJ-POD/tcg

Attachment

**PRESIDING OFFICER'S DECISION** (Mailed 6/19/2003)

**BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

Order Instituting Investigation Into Southern  
California Edison Company's Electric Line  
Construction, Operation, and Maintenance  
Practices.

Southern California Edison Company,

Respondent.

Investigation 01-08-029  
(Filed August 23, 2001)

(See Appendix A for Appearances.)

**OPINION FINDING VIOLATIONS AND IMPOSING SANCTIONS**

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## **OPINION FINDING VIOLATIONS AND IMPOSING SANCTIONS**

### **I. Summary**

In this investigation, the Commission examined Southern California Edison Company (Edison) electric line construction, operation, and maintenance practices during 1998 through 2000. This decision fines Edison a total of \$576,000, primarily for 25 violations of the Commission's General Order (GO) 95 and GO 128 specifying the requirements for the construction, operation, and maintenance of overhead and underground utility systems. The decision fines Edison \$20,000 for each of these 25 violations that have a nexus with an accident involving death, injury, or property damage. It also fines Edison \$1,000 for each of 56 violations of GO 165 for Edison's failure to identify unsafe conditions, and \$20,000 for exceeding GO 165's inspection intervals.

This decision does not fine Edison for 4,721 observed violations of the GOs that Edison remedied promptly once the Commission's Consumer Protection and Safety Division (CPSD) brought the violations to Edison's attention. Both Edison and CPSD agree that it is impossible for a utility to keep its distribution system in perfect compliance with the safety GOs, and that at any given time, there will be multiple violations on a utility's system. The penalties we assess are intended to encourage Edison to focus its immediate resources and efforts on finding and curing GO violations that have the most potential for causing death, injury or property damage.

Thus, for GO violations that have a nexus to an accident involving injury or property damage, we have assessed the maximum penalty of \$20,000, as provided by Pub. Util. Code § 2107. We also assess \$1,000 for each violation concerning Edison's failure to identify safety GO violations in its detailed inspection, and \$20,000 for exceeding GO 165's inspection intervals because of

the potential for harm. We have not assessed penalties for the remaining GO violations because Edison had a maintenance priority system in effect during the relevant period and promptly remedied the GO violations as required by CPSD; moreover, CPSD did not demonstrate that the cumulative effect of Edison's GO violations compromised the system's safety or exceeded the norm. Had CPSD made such a demonstration, these facts would weigh in favor of imposing penalties for all of the violations, regardless of whether the violations caused injury.

## **II. The Order Instituting Investigation (OII)**

The OII alleges that Edison violated three Commission GOs that specify the requirements for the construction, operation, and maintenance of overhead and underground utility systems, including (1) GO 95 (rules for overhead electric line construction); (2) GO 128 (rules for construction of underground electric supply and communications systems); and (3) GO 165 (inspection cycles for electric distribution facilities.)

Based on routine CPSD inspections of Edison's facilities, the OII alleges 4,044 violations of GO 95 requirements on electric poles in Edison's service territory and 677 violations of GO 128 requirements in Edison-owned underground and pad-mounted structures. Additionally, the OII alleges 37 accidents involving Edison's violations of these three GOs and two violations of Rule 1 for providing misleading information to the Commission.

CPSD has the burden of proving that Edison violated the GOs and Rule 1. See *In re Qwest Communications Corporation (Qwest)*, Decision (D.)02-10-059 at 4; *In Re Communication TeleSystems International (CTS)*, D.97-05-089, 72 CPUC2d 621, 642, Conclusion of Law 1. CPSD must prove its allegations by a preponderance of evidence. See *Qwest* at 4; *CTS* at 72 CPUC2d at 642, Conclusion of Law 2.

### **III. Underlying Policy Dispute Between the Parties**

The parties dispute many factual, legal and policy issues. However, the fundamental underlying dispute between them is this: CPSD believes that failure to comply with any provision of any of the Commission's GOs at issue is a violation that can subject Edison to penalties. Edison believes that failure to comply with the GOs in the first instance is only a "nonconformance" or "variance" with the GOs. According to Edison, if a utility has a reasonable maintenance program that prioritizes the correction of a nonconformance, and performs such corrective action according to its priority schedule, it is complying with the GOs.

### **IV. Summary of Parties' Positions**

#### **A. CPSD**

CPSD believes that a utility violates a GO if it fails to comply with a GO's provisions. According to CPSD, Edison has been aware for a number of years of the GO provisions, since GO 95 has existed in some form since 1922 and GO 128 was issued in 1967. Therefore, Edison should not be able to develop its own interpretation, compliance standards, and corrective period for these GOs without Commission authorization of them. CPSD argues that the purpose of the GOs is to establish safety standards for utility distribution systems and that Edison should maintain its system to comply with these GOs.

CPSD alleges that Edison violated GO 95 on 4,044 occasions, GO 128 on 677 occasions, and GO 165 on 94 occasions. Additionally, CPSD alleges that Edison's violations of GO 95 and 128 were at least a factor in 37 accidents involving injury or property damage. CPSD also alleges that Edison committed two Rule 1 violations in presenting misleading statements regarding two



accidents. CPSD believes it is not necessary to prove “intent to mislead” for the Commission to find a Rule 1 violation.

CPSD recommends the maximum penalty of \$20,000 as provided for in Pub. Util. Code § 2107 for each of the GO 95, 128 and 165 violations, for each violation associated with each of the 37 accidents, and for two Rule 1 violations, for a total of \$97,080,000. Although CPSD claims the violations are longstanding, it is willing to forgo seeking daily damages pursuant to Pub. Util. Code § 2108 because the exact period of noncompliance is difficult for CPSD to determine.

## **B. Edison**

Edison argues it should not have to defend its electric line inspection and maintenance program before the Commission has had the opportunity to describe what it regards as reasonable conduct. Edison states that CPSD’s proffered requirement that any noncompliance with the GOs is a violation that should be penalized is an unprecedented and counterproductive standard. Edison argues that this standard will not lead to a safer electric system but only to increased costs. Edison terms noncompliance with the GOs as a “nonconformance,” and argues that a GO violation occurs only if Edison does not remedy the nonconformance during its prioritized maintenance program.

Edison states that it has taken a practical, cost-effective and safety-driven approach in compliance with the GOs. According to Edison, it prioritizes its financial and human resources to serve utility reliability and safety, and no system can, or should, be structured to prevent all nonconformances from occurring.

Edison believes that CPSD has juxtaposed incidents of Edison’s GO nonconformance during the 37 accidents without proving that:

(a) nonconformances existed; (b) the nonconformances caused the accident, or

(c) a reasonable inspection program could have been expected to find and correct the problem before the accident happened. Edison also argues that CPSD's raw data of GO 95 and 128 nonconformances contained in its inspection reports did not demonstrate that the problems were excessive, nor did they shed light on the manner in which Edison manages its inspection and maintenance program. Edison charges that CPSD inspected the most vulnerable and problem-laden part of its system, and that the inspectors had inconsistent criteria and conservative definitions of GO compliance. Edison also disagrees with CPSD's interpretation of GO 165, believing that this GO only requires Edison to have specific intervals for various inspection categories and to report and track inspection results and resulting corrective action.

For the above reasons, Edison argues that penalties are not warranted. Alternatively, even if the Commission were to find a failure to comply with the GOs to be a violation, Edison does not believe penalties are in order because this would be a new Commission interpretation of the GOs of which Edison was unaware. Edison also argues that it did not violate Rule 1 because its personnel responded to CPSD's questions with the best available information at the time of the CPSD inquiries. According to Edison, CPSD must prove that Edison acted with intent, recklessness, or blameworthy conduct before the Commission can find a Rule 1 violation.

Edison argues that the OII raises legitimate issues that should be prospectively addressed through the rulemaking process. It recommends that the following issues be transferred either to the existing GO 95/128 Rulemaking (R.) 01-10-001, or another new generic proceeding:

- Development of a single set of GO 95 and 128 inspection methodologies;

- Standardization of CPSD and utility inspector training;
- Guidelines for establishing, evaluating and revising utility corrective action prioritization programs; and
- Criteria for prospectively determining when a utility may be penalized for failure to comply with its inspection and maintenance program requirements.

## **V. Procedural Background**

The Commission issued this OII in August 2001. The matter was originally set for hearings in February 2002. On November 19, 2001, Edison filed a motion to compel discovery and to extend its filing deadline for serving testimony. By ruling dated January 28, 2002, the Assigned Commissioner and Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) denied in part Edison's motion to compel. Because the ruling required CPSD to produce some additional information, the ruling extended the hearing schedule.

On February 4, 2002, Edison filed a petition for writ of mandate in the California Court of Appeal. On February 6, 2002, the Second Appellate District, Division Eight, issued an order staying this investigation pending further order. The Commission thereafter removed the scheduled hearings from its calendar and stayed this investigation pending further order from the Court of Appeal.

On February 28, 2002, the Second Appellate District denied Edison's petition and dissolved its order staying this proceeding. On March 1, the Assigned Commissioner and ALJ reset the evidentiary hearings for June 2002. On May 25, Edison and CPSD believed that settlement prospects were sufficiently promising that they requested a 60-day schedule extension for the parties to discuss settlement. A May 30 Assigned Commissioner and ALJ ruling gave the parties until July 22 to complete a settlement agreement and established a revised schedule should the parties fail to reach agreement. Settlement

negotiations failed and the Commission held evidentiary hearings from August 28 through September 6 and also on September 17, 2002.

On December 9, 2002, the full Commission held oral argument pursuant to Edison's motion. Subsequently, Edison petitioned to set aside submission so the parties could submit evidence on what Edison argued was CPSD's new standard articulated for the first time at oral argument. The Commission permitted the parties to brief the issues Edison raised and held closing argument before the Assigned Commissioner on April 22, 2003, at which time the investigation was deemed submitted.

## **VI. The General Orders**

### **A. GO 95**

The purpose of GO 95 is to formulate uniform requirements for overhead electrical line construction so as to ensure adequate service and secure safety to persons engaged in the construction, maintenance, operation or use of overhead electrical lines, as well as to the general public.<sup>1</sup>

Edison argues that GO 95 (and GO 128, discussed below) were never intended to set maintenance standards, as opposed to construction standards, except where explicitly stated. We disagree.

Section 12.2 of GO 128 makes clear that the utilities are to maintain, as well as construct, their systems in conformity with the GO.

“All lines and portions of lines shall be maintained in such condition as to provide safety factors not less than those specified in Rule 44.2 Lines and portions of lines constructed or reconstructed on or after the effective date of

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<sup>1</sup> GO 95 § 11.

this Order shall be kept in conformity with the requirements of this Order.”<sup>2</sup>

**B. GO 128**

The purpose of GO 128, which has been effective since 1967, is to formulate uniform requirements for underground electrical supply and communication systems so as to ensure adequate service and secure safety to all persons engaged in the construction, maintenance, operation or use of underground systems, as well as to the general public. Like GO 95, GO 128 sets both construction and maintenance standards. (See § 12.2.)<sup>3</sup>

**C. GO 165**

The need for basic maintenance schedules underlies the inspection schedules developed in GO 165. This GO, enacted in 1997, establishes minimum requirements for electric distribution facilities regarding inspection, condition rating, scheduling and performance of corrective action, record-keeping, and reporting, so as to ensure safe and high quality electric service. After considering points raised by staff and evaluating the expected safe lifespan information the

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<sup>2</sup> GO 95 became effective July 1, 1942, superseding GO 64 and GO 64-A, which had been in effect since 1922 and 1928, respectively. The sections of GO 95 addressing line construction and reconstruction apply to lines and extensions of lines constructed after the effective date of the order, and to any portion of a line constructed prior to GO 95’s effective date if reconstructed. In this proceeding, Edison does not argue that GO 95 or GO 128 is inapplicable to any of the alleged violations because the lines in question were constructed or reconstructed prior to the effective date of GO 95.

<sup>3</sup> Section 12.2 provides that utility systems “shall be maintained in such condition as to secure safety to workmen and the public in general. Systems and portions thereof constructed, reconstructed, or replaced on or after the effective date of these rules shall be kept in conformity with the requirement of these rules.”

utilities submitted, the Commission established several sets of minimum maintenance inspection intervals.

GO 165 provides for different intervals for urban and rural areas and two types of anticipated inspections. The highest level of inspection is a “detailed inspection.” During such inspections, utility personnel are expected to carefully examine and open, if practical and necessary, individual pieces of equipment and structures, and rate and record their condition.<sup>4</sup> The lower level of inspection is called a “patrol inspection,” which is a simple visual inspection of utility equipment and structures designed to identify obvious structural problems and hazards. Patrol inspections may be carried out in the course of other company business.

## **VII. Edison is Required to Comply with Commission GOs; the Failure to do so is a Violation**

The Commission has broad regulatory authority over the safety of utility facilities and operations. (See e.g., Pub. Util. Code §§ 701, 761, 762 and 768.) Utilities are required to provide reasonable service, equipment, and facilities as necessary to promote the safety, health, comfort, and convenience of its patrons, employees, and the public. (See Pub. Util. Code § 451.) In implementing its regulatory responsibilities, the Commission has adopted regulations governing safety in the form of GOs, and has also issued decisions giving guidance regarding safety policy.

Utilities are required to comply with relevant safety statutes, Commission GOs, and decisions, and the Commission has the statutory obligation to require utilities to do so. (See e.g., Pub. Util. Code §§ 702, 2101 and 2106.) A utility’s

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<sup>4</sup> The examinations are visual and routine diagnostic tests, as appropriate.

failure to comply with these statutes, GOs and decisions means a utility has violated them.

We therefore reject Edison's argument that it has not violated GOs 95, 128, or 165 unless Edison knows, or should know, of a "nonconforming condition" and that condition is not corrected according to Edison's maintenance priority system. Nothing in the language of GO 95, 128, or 165 provides a specified grace period within which to comply with these GOs, or provides that failure to comply is a "nonconformance," with a violation occurring at a later time determined by the utility according to its maintenance schedules.

In short, if a utility fails to comply with a GO, it is violating that GO. Moreover, the existence of a violation does not depend on the source of the violation. For instance, facilities may fall out of compliance with GO 95 or 128, and thus be in violation of these GOs, as a result of normal foreseeable deterioration, acts of God, or the intervention of third parties. This is not to say that every violation of these GOs will lead to a Commission investigation and penalties. However, GO 95 and 128 do not contain language susceptible to Edison's interpretation of them.

Contrary to Edison's arguments, this holding does not mean that the Commission has no concept of the real world, or that Edison and other utilities need to "gold-plate" their systems. For instance, Edison argues that various parts of its system are subject to the various stresses of life and begin deteriorating as soon as they are built, just as new cars do once they leave the showroom floor, and it is impossible to maintain the system in a newly built condition.

The Commission does not expect utility systems to remain pristine and newly built 100% of the time. In addition to normal wear and tear, accidents,

acts of God and other factors degrade the utility's system. We understand that some system deterioration is inevitable.

At the same time, because some system deterioration is inevitable, it is to a large extent generally predictable. Although a utility may not be able to predict the precise manner and the exact time a particular piece of equipment or a facility will fail, deterioration is generally predictable, so a utility can determine when a particular class of equipment or facilities is likely to deteriorate to the point that safety or reliability is impaired. In fact, Edison demonstrated that it performs this type of maintenance for some types of equipment, such as wood poles.

Just as a new car is accompanied by an owners' manual setting forth maintenance schedules that prompt car owners to have certain equipment evaluated or replaced at specified intervals, utilities such as Edison have (or should have) equivalent manuals describing the predicted trouble-free life span of various equipment and facilities. This information should assist utilities in developing inspection and maintenance schedules. In fact, as noted above, this life-span information assisted the Commission in developing the minimum inspection intervals under GO 165.

### **VIII. The Role of a Maintenance Priority System**

As stated above, if Edison is found in violation of a GO, it is subject to a penalty as provided by statute. (See, e.g., § 2107.) However, the Commission has discretion in determining whether and how much to assess Edison for any violations of the GOs. Assessing the appropriate level of penalties involves some discretion under applicable statutes, and the Commission's decision setting forth criteria for considering penalties. (See D.98-12-075.) The fact that utilities have limited resources and a utility may not be able to correct every violation instantly



does not eliminate the existence of a violation, but may in some cases be a factor in assessing penalties. Penalties may also be imposed in order to encourage a utility to focus its system maintenance and repairs so as to prevent death, injury, and property damage. Before discussing the penalty issue, we discuss the issue of a maintenance priority system and its role in this investigation.

Edison believes there are different safety risks associated with different types of violations, and implementing a maintenance priority system is the most cost-effective and efficient way to maintain a safe and reliable system. According to this argument, treating all violations of the GOs as equal will either mean that the maintenance program will be unduly expensive or that dangerous violations may be overlooked while personnel are concentrating on minor problems. Edison explains that some violations create a clear risk of serious injury or death and must be corrected immediately. Other violations create a lesser risk, and, in Edison's view, should only be corrected when workers are in the area for another reason. This is because immediate corrective action may expose workers to unnecessary risks by bringing them into a hazardous zone they would not otherwise need to enter at the time, and by distracting workers from concentrating on finding and correcting more serious violations.

In keeping with this philosophy, Edison currently uses a five-tier maintenance priority system.<sup>5</sup> Priority 1 corrections require immediate attention because Edison believes they pose the greatest risk to public safety and system

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<sup>5</sup> Edison's maintenance priority system has changed over the course of the years that are the subject of this investigation. Prior to January 2001, Edison used a six-point numerical rating scale for its system, with the highest priority items ranked Priority 6 and the lowest priority items at Priority 1.

reliability. Edison assigns to Priorities 2 through 4 items that in Edison's opinion pose much less risk to public safety or system reliability, with the following intervals as a typical repair or replacement period: (a) for Priority 2 items, 60 days (or within one year for a wood pole); (b) for Priority 3 items, one year for underground facilities, 18 months for overhead facilities, and three years for wood poles; and (c) for Priority 4 items; three years for underground facilities and five years for overhead facilities and wood poles. Priority 5 items are those in which Edison believes the safety risk to employees in performing the repair is greater than the risk to the public or to system reliability in leaving the problem uncorrected. Therefore, Edison's system provides that Priority 5 items will be corrected at the next time a crew is at that structure to perform other tasks at that work level. (Edison also calls Priority 5 "opportunity maintenance.")

CPSD, on the other hand, hesitates to acknowledge that there may be useful distinctions between the timing to correct different types of violations. In CPSD's view, every rule in the GOs was adopted for sound safety reasons, and any violation of any rule creates an unacceptable risk.

As in many contested proceedings, what is reasonable lies between these two extremes. We find, as stated above, that the existence of a maintenance priority system does not delay the occurrence of a violation of a GO. However, we believe that some violations create more serious hazards than others. For example, live electrical wires hanging into the street are more critically in need of immediate correction than replacing a cracked or missing high voltage sign at the power line level.

The flaw in Edison's analysis is its belief that its five-tier maintenance priority system creates a timetable for corrective action that may begin at the time the violation is noted. This is especially the case for many of the Priorities

3-5, which may take a year or longer to repair.<sup>6</sup> To use the new car analogy, Edison's approach appears to schedule maintenance from the time the brakes have already failed, rather than time the car left the showroom. Indeed, to some extent Edison's approach creates a second maintenance timeframe that begins only after the original maintenance schedules established in GO 165 have run. Ideally, Edison should be inspecting for and repairing violations of GO 95 and 128, and also should be taking corrective action to the extent possible in order to forestall violations of the GOs. Refining its maintenance priority system may help Edison achieve this goal.<sup>7</sup>

Developing more precision in Edison's maintenance priority system will also enable the utility to better comply with GO 165. That GO requires the utility to report a date certain by which required corrective action scheduled to occur during the GO's reporting period is actually performed. Similarly, GO 165 requires utilities to report totals and percentage of equipment in need of corrective action, with a scheduled date beyond the reporting period, classified by the amount of time remaining before the scheduled action.

There should be ways to distinguish between hazards requiring immediate correction and hazards for which more time may be taken that do not involve multi-tiered and years-long corrective action schedules. This proceeding is not the forum to approve Edison's maintenance priority system or to refine it with particularity. However, we direct that Edison, in consultation with CPSD, refine its maintenance priority system with the following goals in mind:

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<sup>6</sup> Even under Priority 2, it may take one year to repair a wood pole.

<sup>7</sup> We note that Edison states it has further refined its maintenance priority system in response to recommendations from an expert Edison retained for this proceeding.

- Decrease the amount of time for making system repairs;
- Achieve a more defined period within which system problems are repaired;
- To the extent possible, the inspectors should be capable of fixing observed system problems at the time of the inspection (i.e., the persons inspecting should also be trained to fix routine problems);
- Where Edison recommends opportunity maintenance, such as repairing high voltage signs, determine how to isolate the problem and how to make more immediate repairs that might in part remedy the problem. (See the discussion of high voltage signs below for examples.)

## **IX. High Voltage Signs**

We briefly discuss high voltage signs because cracked or missing high voltage signs at the primary power level constitute a significant number of CPSPD's alleged violations. Edison believes that these signs should only be repaired on an opportunity maintenance basis, or whenever a worker is in the area for another purpose. Edison alleges that an increase in worker accidents occur as the result of entering the primary power level for the sole purpose of replacing a high voltage sign. Edison also believes that high voltage signs at that level are not useful, citing to numerous states that no longer have such a requirement.

The high voltage sign requirement is not only contained in GO 95 but also is a California statutory requirement in certain instances. (See Pub. Util. Code § 8029.<sup>8</sup>) Thus, Edison's rationale does not excuse compliance. If Edison

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<sup>8</sup> Pub. Util. Code § 8029 states that "no person shall run, place, erect, or maintain any wire or cable which conducts at any one time more than 600 volts of electricity, without causing each crossarm, or such other appliance as is used in lieu thereof, to which such

*Footnote continued on next page*

believes the signs are no longer necessary, it should seek to change the applicable GOs and statutes to more meaningful criteria.

Although it may be dangerous for a worker to make a special trip to the primary power level solely to repair a high voltage sign, there may be less dangerous methods to achieve similar warnings. For example, a worker might be able to post a sign at a lower level on the power pole, warning of high voltage wires above. Or there might be other places where such warnings could be placed with less danger to achieve the same result. We direct Edison and CPSD to meet and confer in a cooperative effort to determine whether adjustments to the high voltage sign requirement would achieve the same results as the sign. If useful alternatives emerge, the parties may wish to raise them in R.01-10-001, or another appropriate forum, or in requesting legislative amendments. A similar exercise may be useful for other items where Edison or CPSD believe the safety repairs pose a disproportionate risk to utility workers. In the meantime, Edison's maintenance priority system should develop a more defined timeframe to repair such violations.

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wire or cable is attached to be kept at all times painted a bright yellow color, or, on such crossarm, or other appliance used in lieu thereof, shall be placed signs, providing, in white letters on a green background, not less than three (3) inches in height the words 'high voltage' on the face and back of each crossarm. The provisions of this section do not apply to crossarms to which are attached wires or cables conducting more than 10,000 volts of electricity, and which are situated outside the corporate limits of a city." Violation of § 8029 is a misdemeanor pursuant to Pub. Util. Code § 8038.

## **X. Edison's Defenses**

### **A. Nondelegable Duty**

In some instances where Edison has contracted its duties to comply with GOs to independent contractors, Edison argues that it is not liable for a violation of the GOs because it is not responsible for the failure of its contractor to properly perform contracted work. We disagree.

Edison is responsible for complying with these safety GOs and cannot escape this responsibility by delegating it to independent contractors. This responsibility is consistent with California law and Commission precedent.

In *Snyder v. Southern California Edison Company* (1955) 44 Cal.2d 793, the California Supreme Court held that the duty imposed on Edison by Pub. Util. Code § 702 and GO 95 could not be delegated to an independent contractor so as to insulate the utility from liability.

In *Snyder*, the plaintiffs were linemen and employees of the independent contractor J. W. Wilson Company, which Edison hired to repair and construct power lines. Plaintiffs were injured when the wire-supporting pole they had climbed fell to the ground. The pole was less than 6 ½ feet into the ground, while Rule 49.1C of GO 95 required the poles be set at least 6 ½ feet into the ground and even deeper where, as in this case, the soil was not firm.

The Court reasoned as follows:

“Utility companies, either electric, telephone or telegraph, are responsible for nearly all pole installations. In the law relating to such utilities there is no express provision that such duties may be delegated. The requirements in section 702 of the [Public] Utilities Code that the utility must do everything necessary to secure compliance with the law and rules by its agents and officers is nothing more than an additional precautionary measure to prompt the utilities with regard to compliance by those persons. It does not

mean that it may evade the duty by the independent contractor device or limit the scope of its duties thereby. It does not negate the existence of a nondelegable duty.” (*Snyder*, 44 Cal.2d at 801-802.<sup>9</sup>)

In reaching its holding, the Court relied on the common law principle to impose liability upon franchised common carriers, reasoning that the “effectiveness of safety regulations is necessarily impaired if a carrier conducts its business by engaging independent contractors over whom it exercise no control.” (*Snyder*, 44 Cal.2d at 798.) The Court described another group of cases that predicate liability on the part of the employer of an independent contractor for the misconduct of the latter in the performance of certain “intrinsically dangerous” work. (*Id.* at 800.)

The Commission has similarly held that utilities have a nondelegable duty to comply with all applicable safety codes and regulations in certain instances. In D. 00-06-038, the Commission held that Southern California Gas Company has a nondelegable duty under state and federal law to comply with all applicable safety codes and regulations governing its gas lines and cannot avoid the duty of compliance by allowing independent contractors to install earthquake valves on the utility’s side of the meter. The Commission reasoned that California case law, GOs, and federal law supported this result.

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<sup>9</sup> In tort law, this liability does not ordinarily extend to what the courts call “collateral” or “casual” negligence on the part of the contractor and its employees. (See *Snyder*, 44 Cal.2d at 801.) *Snyder* reads this exception narrowly to mean that the activity in question is not necessarily part of the duty imposed. Thus, in *Snyder*, the Court found that the construction and maintenance of lines, which includes poles, is not included within the exception because that activity is a necessary part of the utility’s business.

In summary, the safety GOs in question establish certain duties and standards that Edison must meet to ensure adequate service and safety. California case law and prior Commission precedent require that the responsibilities imposed by the GOs are nondelegable.

### **B. Employees' Violation of GOs**

As a general matter, to the extent Edison's own employees are responsible for a violation of the GOs, so too are the employees of Edison's independent contractors.

In some of the 37 accidents listed below, CPSD alleges Edison violated the "due care" rule, which requires owners and employees of electrical systems to reduce to a minimum the hazard of accidental injury to their own or fellow employees, to the public and to other utilities.<sup>10</sup> Edison urges the Commission to adopt the "independent employee act defense," which Cal/OSHA recognizes when an employee is spontaneously negligent (i.e., a rogue employee).<sup>11</sup> Edison argues that since it is liable under tort law to third parties who may be harmed by such employee conduct, it has the incentive to minimize the negligence of its workforce.

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<sup>10</sup> See GO 95, Rule 31.1; GO 128, Rule 17.1.

<sup>11</sup> Under the Cal/OSHA criteria, the employer may utilize the affirmative defense if it can show: (1) the employee was experienced in the job being performed; (2) the employer has a well-devised safety program which includes safety training; (3) the employer effectively enforces the safety program; (4) the employer sanctions employees who violate the safety program; and (5) the employee caused a safety violation and knew that it contravened the employer's safety program. See *Mercury Service, Inc.*, Cal/OSHA App. 77-1133, Decision after Reconsideration (October 16, 1980.)



For purposes of the “due care” obligations in GO 95 and 128, if, despite Edison management’s best efforts at achieving on-the-job safety as defined in the Cal/OSHA criteria listed above, an employee is spontaneously negligent, we would find no violation of the utility’s “due care” obligations under these GOs. We apply this principle to the accidents described below.

**C. GO 165 Does not Shield Edison from GO 95 or 128 Violations**

GO 165 requires that utilities inspect their distribution facilities as often as necessary to ensure reliable, high-quality and safe operation, and establishes a minimum level of inspection frequency with which a utility must comply. A utility conducting only the minimum level of inspections required by GO 165, when more frequent inspections are necessary to ensure reliability, may be found to violate this GO because, under GO 165, utilities are required to use their judgment and conduct inspections as often as necessary to ensure a safe and reliable operation.<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, the plain language of GO 165 states that the GO’s requirements are “in addition to the requirements imposed upon utilities under GO 95 and 128 to maintain a safe and reliable electric system. Nothing in this GO relieves any utility from any requirements or obligations that it has under GO 95 and 128.” Thus, nothing in GO 165 can shield a utility from a finding of a GO 95 or 128 violation.

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<sup>12</sup> As stated in D.97-03-070, 71 CPUC2d 471, 476 (adopting GO 165): “[T]he standards we adopt today are maximum acceptable lengths for inspection cycles. In certain circumstances, it may be prudent to conduct more frequent inspections to assure high-quality service and safe operations. In those cases, the utilities are responsible to inspect facilities more frequently.”

#### **D. Inspection Intervals**

CPSD alleges Edison has violated GO 165 numerous times because the maximum period between certain inspections exceeds the time intervals specified in GO 165, Appendix A. For instance, according to Appendix A, the maximum period between patrol inspections of overhead conductors in urban areas is one year. CPSD believes that pursuant to this requirement, these inspections must occur every 12 months, i.e., no more than 12 months may elapse between inspections.

In contrast, Edison believes it is in compliance if the required inspections to occur in successive calendar years, i.e., for a patrol conducted on January 1, 2000, the next patrol could be conducted almost two years later (December 31, 2001) consistent with the one-year requirement. Edison argues that it is reasonably interpreting the GO, that it is completing 93% of its circuit patrols within CPSD's definition, and that some flexibility is necessary and customary in the industry to facilitate efficient workforce scheduling. For example, GO 165 permits circuit patrols to be carried out in the course of other company business. Edison argues that it would be more difficult to synchronize the circuit patrols with other company business if the Commission adopts CPSD's interpretation of GO 165. Moreover, Edison points out that the above example (where inspections occurred almost two years apart) could only occur once. If Edison conducted its annual circuit patrol on December 31, 2001, its next annual inspection would have to occur no later than December 31 of the following year, or 12 months later.

In interpreting GO 165, we first look at the language of this GO. Appendix A sets forth a grid of the maximum allowable inspection intervals for certain parts of a utility's distribution facilities (i.e., overhead and underground

transformers, wood poles, etc.) GO 165, Section IV states that each utility shall conduct inspections of its distribution facilities as necessary to assure reliable, high-quality, and safe operation, “but in no case may the period between inspections (measured in years) exceed the time specified in the attached table.” (71 CPUC2d at 479.) This language plainly means that the maximum interval between inspections is measured in years (i.e., 365 day increments). If the Commission intended for a utility to have much greater leeway (i.e., up to two years to conduct an annual inspection) it would have said so. Edison’s interpretation renders inspection more uncertain, not less so. This is not consistent with the purpose of GO 165 which endeavors to make more certain the periods of inspection.

#### **E. Subjectivity of CPSD Inspectors**

Edison also argues it is unfair to require it to comply with all provisions of the GOs because these GOs are often subject to reasonable disagreement among CPSD inspectors. For instance, according to Edison, some CPSD inspectors find a cracked high voltage sign or ground moulding to be a violation of GO 95 and others do not.

Although there may be some subjectivity among CPSD inspectors, the record also demonstrates subjectivity among Edison employees as to what constitutes compliance with the GOs. The record demonstrates this is not a pervasive problem, and Edison did not specifically protest CPSD’s audit findings at the time they were made. We therefore do not excuse Edison’s violations of the GOs based on this defense.

#### **F. Former CPSD Staff’s Interpretation of the GOs**

Edison argues that it has not violated the GOs, in part, based on its understanding of former CPSD staff’s interpretation of these GOs. Edison argues

that the CPSD safety audit letters described Edison's conduct as "nonconforming conditions," "variances," or "noncompliances," but never as a GO "violation." According to Edison, past Commission settlements regarding tree-trimming cases permitted other utilities up to 14 days to resolve tree-trimming "nonconformities," and that therefore its conduct cannot be deemed a violation.<sup>13</sup>

We disagree. Based on our discussion above, failure to comply with a GO is a violation of that GO. While CPSD's past interpretation of GO compliance may be relevant in setting appropriate penalties, staff's interpretation of what is or is not a GO violation is not binding on the Commission. Edison's reference to past Commission-approved settlements is not persuasive because Rule 51.8 of the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure states that our approval of settlements does not constitute approval of, or precedent regarding, any principle or issue in the proceeding or in any future proceeding.

#### **G. Achievable Standards**

Edison argues that the Commission should not find a failure to comply with these safety GOs a violation, because neither Edison, nor any other utility, can meet the "perfectionist" standard of maintaining its system in complete conformance with the GOs. According to Edison, at any given moment, on any electric distribution system of significant size, there will be scores of nonconforming conditions. Edison believes that when a standard cannot be met in the real world, it ceases to be a meaningful standard at all.

As discussed above, a failure to comply with a GO, as with any Commission order, is a violation. In determining whether to penalize a utility

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<sup>13</sup> Edison cites D.99-07-029.

for these violations, and in what amount, we recognize that 100% compliance with these GOs at all times is not realistic. However, because these GOs concern safety, we want to be sure all utilities take compliance seriously.

The Commission resolves investigations on a case-by-case basis, and determining the appropriate penalty is situation specific. However, the following general observations may be useful in order to encourage a utility to focus its resources and efforts on finding and curing the GO violations that have the most potential for causing death, injury or property damage. As a general matter, if a GO violation has a nexus with an accident involving death, injury, or property damage, a utility will incur penalties. If a utility fails to find GO safety violations in its detailed inspections, penalties may be appropriate because we want to ensure that the detailed inspection programs are thorough and identify outstanding GO violations for repair.

For other observed GO violations that do not have a nexus with an accident causing damage, penalties may not be appropriate, provided a utility has a reasonable maintenance priority system to identify and repair violations, and also promptly remedies any GO violations which CPSD brings to its attention within the timetable directed by CPSD. However, if CPSD demonstrates that the cumulative effect of such multiple GO violations on a utility's system compromises the system's safety, or exceeds the norm, these facts would weigh in favor of imposing penalties for the violations, regardless of whether the violations have caused injury or damage.

## **XI. GO Violations**

### **A. The 37 Accidents**

The 37 accidents are described in detail in Appendix B.<sup>14</sup> In three of the accidents, we find no GO violation as alleged by CPSD.<sup>15</sup> In nine of the accidents, we find a GO violation, but find no nexus between the violation and the injury.<sup>16</sup> In 11 of the accidents, we find a GO violation and a nexus between that violation and property damage.<sup>17</sup> In 14 of the accidents, we find a GO violation and a nexus between either personal injury or death.<sup>18</sup> In short, we find GO violations in 34 of the 37 accidents investigated for this proceeding.

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<sup>14</sup> The accidents are set forth according to Edison's categorization of them: (a) No Nonconformance; (b) Nonconformance But No Causation; (c) Nonconformance, Causation, But No Inspection Violation; and (d) Nonconformance, Causation, and a Failure to Detect/Remedy. In Appendix B, we discuss the accidents in detail and reach our own conclusion as to whether Edison violated the GOs as alleged by CPSD.

<sup>15</sup> These accidents are 11/23/98-Rancho Palos Verdes; 8/27/99-Hesperia; and 4/7/2000-Rancho Palos Verdes.

<sup>16</sup> These accidents are: 9/16/98-Santa Ana; 11/14/98-Altadena; 11/17/98-Camarillo; 12/18/98-Inglewood; 5/5/99-Corona; 7/23/99-Sun City; 9/19/99-Monrovia; 8/11/2000-Cypress; 9/18/2000-Monterey Park.

<sup>17</sup> These accidents are: 4/16/98-Marina Del Rey; 8/29/98-Hacienda Heights; 10/5/98-Ontario; 9/19/99-Simi Valley; 11/5/99-Palm Springs; 11/15/99-Pamona; 5/29/2000-Santa Fe Springs; 8/4/2000-Inglewood; 8/8/2000-Apple Valley; 12/14/2000-Palm Springs; 12/19/2000-Ventura.

<sup>18</sup> These accidents are: 5/26/98-Newbury Park; 6/21/98-Lancaster; 10/15/98-Alhambra; 12/10/98-Corona; 7/20/99-Long Beach; 11/19/99-Valencia; 11/20/99-Pomona; 1/28/2000-Agoura; 3/1/2000-Emerald Bay; 5/1/2000-Orange; 7/3/2000-Inglewood; 7/31/2000-Montclair; 10/12/2000-Valencia; 12/20/2000-Baldwin Park.

## **B. Violations of GO 95 and 128**

Edison did not contest CPSD's findings of nonconformances with GO 95 and 128 at the time CPSD made them; in fact, once notified, Edison repaired these problems as required by CPSD. We applaud Edison for timely addressing these problems. Nonetheless, we find, based on CPSD's inspection results, 4,044 violations of GO 95 and 677 violations of GO 128.

We address below Edison's further arguments on whether it is appropriate to penalize Edison for these violations.

## **C. Violations of GO 165**

### **1. Identification of Unsafe Conditions**

CPSD states that it conducted a random audit comparing CPSD's and Edison's inspection results. CPSD found 94 GO 95 violations on 46 poles, whereas Edison found 12 violations on the same poles. CPSD therefore concludes that Edison committed 82 violations of GO 165 for failing to identify the unsafe conditions CPSD identified in its inspection.

Edison argues that this audit was not random, but rather that CPSD deliberately targeted Edison's earliest detailed inspections with the fewest findings and refused to conduct additional audits on later detailed inspections which Edison believes were more thorough. Edison's expert also testified that CPSD violated audit principles by allowing its inspectors to know in advance the Edison inspection results and denying Edison the right to comment on the audit. Edison also states this audit lacks context because CPSD did not conduct it on any other utility. Finally, Edison states it actively participated in the GO 165 audit, and its recorded results show far more poles inspected and far fewer discrepancies than CPSD's numbers. Edison believes the correct numbers should be 68 GO 95 violations on 70 poles inspected, instead of 94 violations on 46 poles.

Even under Edison's own numbers, a discrepancy between 68 and 12 violations is large. Although we realize this audit occurred on one of the areas where Edison first conducted its detailed inspection, Edison did not go back immediately and re-inspect this area once it refined its inspection techniques. The goal of GO 165 inspections is to make utilities find all matters needing corrective attention, including violations of GO 95 and GO 128. We expect such inspections to be thorough, deliberate, and detailed. We therefore find 56 violations of GO 165 (68 CPSD observed violations minus 12 Edison-observed violations).<sup>19</sup>

## **2. Period Between Inspections**

As stated above, CPSD's interpretation of GO 165's inspection interval requirement is correct, and the maximum interval between inspections is measured in years (i.e., 365 day increments.) We find one violation of GO 165 for Edison's faulty interpretation of this requirement.

## **3. Scheduling and Performing Corrective Action**

CPSD alleges Edison violated GO 165 for failing to perform corrective work in a timely fashion. CPSD argues that during 1998-2000, Edison assigned most of the GO 95 violations it found in annual patrols a low priority repair level, such that the violations were scheduled for repair on an opportunity basis (i.e., the next time Edison visits the facility to perform other work with no time period specified) or within five years. CPSD does not link any of these alleged

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<sup>19</sup> Cumulatively, we find 4,812 GO violations by Edison, consisting of 34 accident-related violations, a total of 4,721 violations of GO 95 and 128, and 57 violations of GO 165.



violations with harm, or demonstrate how they adversely affected the safety or reliability of Edison's system.

As stated above, approval of Edison's maintenance prioritization system is beyond the scope of this investigation; however, Edison should refine its maintenance priority system. In the process of our adoption of GO 165, we stated that for the time being, "standards for maintenance, repair, or replacement should be based on performance, leaving greater management discretion and recognizing that this discretion does not render maintenance, repair, and replacement decisions beyond future regulatory reform or penalties."

(D.96-11-021, 69 CPUC2d 224, 233.) Because CPSD has not demonstrated how the alleged GO 165 violations affect the safety or reliability concerns with the specific GO 165 allegations it alleges, and because GO 165 does not contain times certain by which Edison must repair or replace equipment, we find CPSD has not met its burden of proof in demonstrating the GO 165 violations pertinent to scheduling and performing corrective action.

#### **D. Alleged Rule 1 Violations**

CPSD alleges Rule 1 violations with respect to the June 21, 1998 accident in Lancaster and the May 26, 1998 accident in Newbury Park. Both accidents are summarized in Appendix B. CPSD's alleged Rule 1 violations are based on the belief that Edison gave incomplete or inaccurate information to staff during its investigation of the above accidents.

Rule 1 provides in pertinent part that persons transacting business with the Commission shall never mislead the Commission or its staff by an artifice or

false statement of fact or law.<sup>20</sup> The Commission has recently held that Rule 1 violations require purposeful intent, recklessness, or gross negligence in regard to communications with the Commission. (See D.02-08-063, *Application of Pacific Fiber Link, L.L.C.*, 2002 Cal.PUC LEXIS 533.) In D.94-11-018, 57 CPUC2d 176, the Commission recognized that a line of prior decisions held that situations involving a failure to correctly cite a proposition of law, a lack of candor or withholding information, and a failure to correctly inform and to correct mistaken information are potential Rule 1 violations, and clarified that a Rule 1 violation can result from such conduct if it is reckless or grossly negligent. 57 CPUC2d at 204.

With these standards in mind, we discuss the two allegations.

#### **1. Lancaster**

In this accident, a person was fatally injured when he climbed an Edison pole, allegedly to steal Edison property for salvage, and came in contact with an energized transformer fuse holder. CPSD alleges that Edison misled the Commission by stating that the idle transformer had not been removed because there was an outstanding new business meter order for service, when in fact there was no such order.

Edison stated that in this district, there was an outstanding new business order, but this order was created not in response to a new customer but

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<sup>20</sup> Rule 1 states that “any person who signs a pleading or brief, enters an appearance at a hearing, or transacts business with the Commission, by such act represents that he or she is authorized to do so and agrees to comply with the laws of this State; to maintain the respect due to the Commission, members of the Commission and its Administrative Law Judges; and never to mislead the Commission or its staff by an artifice or false statement of fact or law.”

simply to preserve account information for a particular address that might otherwise be lost when service is terminated. Edison states that new business orders were used for this purpose in this district.

We find confusion in Edison's communication practices, but do not find intentional, reckless, or grossly negligent failure to investigate the difference in meaning between the term "new business order" in the various districts.<sup>21</sup> We therefore do not find a Rule 1 violation here.

## **2. Newbury Park**

CPSD requested information regarding any instructions Edison provided to the subcontractor who was performing work on Edison's transformers in the Newbury Park area. Edison told CPSD that Edison was unaware the subcontractor was accessing the transformers because the main contractor retained the subcontractor without Edison's knowledge. CPSD alleges its further investigation revealed that an Edison employee testified in a deposition that Edison was aware that the subcontractor was repairing the transformers and that the contractor had been given access to work on the interior of the transformers.

Edison believes it gave CPSD accurate information. Edison states that the deposition testimony indicated that, several months prior to the Newbury Park accident, an Edison foreman from a different district provided the subcontractor with a key and cutaway locks for a repair job in Orange County

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<sup>21</sup> In our discussion of the Lancaster accident, we find a violation of GO 95, Rule 31, and determine that Edison did not make a reasonable inquiry within seven months to determine if the facilities were permanently abandoned. However, this behavior does not translate to a Rule 1 violation.

(Newbury Park is not located in Orange County.) According to Edison, CPSD's conclusion is erroneous because, at the time of CPSD's inquiry, Edison did not know the contractor on the Newbury Park job subcontracted the job.

We find miscommunication occurred but, again, not the type of conduct to constitute a Rule 1 violation. There are no circumstances surrounding the accident that should have caused Edison to interview other districts before responding to CPSD's question.

Edison argues that it is also not required to update CPSD on the information it learned from the deposition, and such a requirement would be never-ending. We understand Edison's concern about updating the Commission in all instances, and we do not find a Rule 1 violation in this instance because of the specific facts of the case.<sup>22</sup> However, as a general principle, in accident investigations, if Edison discovers that information it has communicated to the Commission in response to the Commission's inquiry is in error, Edison should promptly communicate with the Commission to make appropriate corrections.

## **XII. Sanctions**

### **A. Summary**

We fine Edison \$576,000 based on a penalty of \$20,000 for each of the 25 accidents where there was a nexus between a GO violation and either personal injury or property damage, \$1,000 for each of the 56 violations of GO 165 for the failure to identify unsafe conditions, and \$20,000 for one violation for exceeding GO 165's inspection intervals. We do not fine Edison for the other GO violations.

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<sup>22</sup> See discussion in Appendix B. The fact that the subcontractor may have had a key to the transformer was not the cause of the subcontractor's injury, since the key did not work in the transformer involved.

One of the reasons we do not fine Edison the maximum penalties for each violation, as advocated by CPSD, is because CPSD failed to put its request in any kind of industry context or to demonstrate that the number of GO violations compromised the safety or reliability of Edison's system. Edison and CPSD agreed, and we find, that the utility cannot maintain its distribution system so that there are no GO 95 and 128 violations at a given time. For instance, a typical pole on Edison's system has over 100 items that must conform to GO 95, and a typical underground or pad-mount facility has as many as 40 items that must conform to GO 128. Based on this record, we cannot determine whether the 4,812 GO violations compromise the integrity or safety of Edison's system, or whether these violations are the norm or are excessive (i.e., as compared to other similarly situated utilities.) We cannot determine whether these violations serve as the canary in the coal mine, warning us of safety problems on Edison's system, or whether they are at an appropriate level for a utility the size of Edison (provided that they are repaired within a reasonable time.) We therefore weigh this lack of context, as well as the factors set forth below, in setting the appropriate level of penalties.

### **B. CPSD's Recommendations**

CPSD recommends the maximum penalty of \$20,000 for each of its alleged 4,854 violations of the GOs or Rule 1 for a total fine of \$97,080,000. Because the exact period of noncompliance is difficult to determine, CPSD would forgo seeking penalties pursuant to Pub. Util. Code § 2108, for continuing violations.

CPSD recommends the maximum penalty per incident because of (1) the severity of the offense, in that some of the violations caused death and dismemberment, and all are safety hazards with the potential to cause fatalities and bodily injury; (2) the number of violations, considering that CPSD has few

resources to invest in inspection; (3) no mitigating circumstances; (4) Edison's conduct, first, in taking no responsibility for any of the 37 accidents and, second, in setting up its maintenance program; (5) Edison's financial resources as one of the largest utilities in the country; and (6) the high degree of wrongdoing inherent in a threat to general public health and safety.

### **C. Edison's Response**

Edison argues that there is no basis for imposing any penalty. Edison believes that CPSD's proposed penalty conflicts with all of the criteria articulated by the Commission. According to Edison, (1) the proposed penalty is out of proportion to the severity of the offenses; (2) Edison's conduct was understandable and did not result in any financial benefit to the utility; (3) there is no demonstrated need for deterrence; (4) the totality of the circumstances call for no fine; and (5) a fine in this context would be wholly unprecedented.

### **D. Discussion**

Section 2107 sets a range of penalties for a utility that violates or fails to comply with an order, decision, rule, demand, or requirement of the Commission in cases such as this, where there is no other statutory penalty. Under § 2107, a utility is subject to a penalty of not less than \$500 nor more than \$20,000 for each offense. Section 2108 states that, in the event of a continuing violation, each day's continuance represents a separate and distinct offense.

In determining the amount of the penalty, we look to the criteria we established in D.98-12-075, Appendix B, (Penalty Guidelines) which have provided guidance in all subsequent cases in which such issues arise. We stated that the purpose of fines is to effectively deter further violations by the perpetrator or others. We now discuss the relevant criteria in D.98-12-075 to explain how we arrive at today's penalty.

## **1. Severity of the Offense**

The Commission assesses the physical, economic, and regulatory harm surrounding the violations in determining the severity of the offense. According to D.98-12-075, the most severe violations are those that cause physical harm to people or property, with violations that threaten such harm closely following. Economic harm reflects the level of costs imposed upon the victims of the violation and the unlawful benefits gained by the utility. The fact that the economic harm may be difficult to quantify does not itself diminish the need for sanctions. The Commission also considers the harm to the integrity of the regulatory process in setting penalties, because such compliance is necessary to the proper functioning of the regulatory process. D.98-12-075 states that disregarding a statutory or Commission directive, regardless of its effect on the public, will be accorded a high level of severity.

We find that in 25 of the accidents, a GO violation occurred and this violation had a nexus to physical harm or property damage. This is severe harm, which the safety GOs are intended to prevent. The violations of GO 165 for failing to identify GO violations during the detailed inspections, and exceeding GO 165's maximum inspection intervals have a strong potential for causing such harm, because Edison had the opportunity to find and correct such violations during its inspection program and did not do so. The other violations also have the potential to cause such harm, because they are violations of safety requirements.

Failing to comply with Commission GOs is harmful to the regulatory process. However, Edison met with Commission staff to determine staff's opinion of Edison's maintenance and safety program and received mixed messages from staff as to whether Edison had violated a GO before it had a

chance to remedy the violation. When CPSD brought numerous violations to Edison's attention, Edison remedied the problems. These factors mitigate the severity of the offense in all instances except where injury or damage had a nexus to the GO violation.

## **2. The Utility's Actions to Prevent, Detect, and Disclose and Remedy a Violation**

According to D.98-12-075, the utility is expected to take reasonable steps to ensure compliance with Commission directives, including regularly reviewing its own operations to ensure full compliance. In evaluating the utility's efforts to ensure compliance, the Commission will consider the utility's past record of compliance with Commission directives.

A utility should also diligently monitor its activities. Deliberate, as opposed to inadvertent, wrongdoing, will be considered an aggravating factor. The level and extent of management's involvement in, or tolerance of, the offense will be considered in determining the amount of the penalty.

Utilities are also expected promptly to bring a violation to the Commission's attention. What constitutes "prompt" will depend on the circumstances. Violations that physically endanger the public must be immediately corrected and thereafter reported to the Commission staff. Reported violations should be remedied at the earliest administratively feasible time.

Edison instituted a maintenance priority system in order to comply with the GOs. Edison admits that this system is not perfect and is constantly undergoing modification and improvement. As stated above, although we do not approve or disapprove this program in this decision, Edison can improve on



this program further, by improving its inspections and improving the speed by which it remedies GO violations.

Edison's meetings with Commission staff on GO compliance, and its willingness to promptly repair the GO violations which CPSD found, also serve as mitigating factors.

### **3. Need for Deterrence**

Fines should be set at a level that deters future violations. Effective deterrence requires that the Commission recognize the financial resources of the utility in setting a fine.

Edison is a very large utility with extensive financial resources. Therefore, a large fine for GO violations having a nexus to personal injury or property damage is appropriate, as is a more moderate fine where Edison failed to detect GO violations during detailed inspections. This is intended to ensure that Edison conducts thorough detailed inspections of its distribution system.

### **4. Totality of the Circumstances in Furtherance of the Public Interest**

According to D.98-12-075, setting a fine at a level that effectively deters further unlawful conduct by the utility and others requires us to specifically tailor the package of sanctions, including any fine, to the facts of the case. The Commission will review the facts which tend to mitigate the degree of wrongdoing as well as any facts which exacerbate the wrongdoing. In all cases, the harm will be evaluated from the perspective of the public interest.

#### **a) Mitigating Facts:**

- No actual physical harm resulting from 4,787 violations of the GOs;
- Ongoing discussions with Commission staff about the appropriate means of complying with the GOs;

- Mixed messages from Commission staff as to whether Edison has violated a safety GO before the utility had an opportunity to remedy the violation;
- Edison repaired or remedied the 4,721 violations CPSD brought to its attention as required by CPSD;
- Edison made changes to its operations to prevent reoccurrence of some of the accidents (i.e., better communications with its contractors, better training of its employees, etc.)

**b) Exacerbating Facts:**

- 25 instances of personal injury or death, or property damage which have a nexus to a GO violation;
- Failure to discover and therefore repair 56 GO safety violations during its detailed inspection program;
- Exceeded maximum inspection intervals in GO 165.
- Edison is a very large utility with extensive financial resources.

**5. The Role of Precedent**

The Commission will consider (1) previous decisions that involve reasonably comparable factual circumstances, and (2) any substantial differences in outcome.

Neither party identified prior decisions with reasonably comparable facts. Edison argues that because the Commission has never penalized a utility for the kind of behavior at issue in this proceeding, it cannot do so here before the Commission warns the utility that it might do so.

As discussed above, Edison and all Commission-regulated utilities are on notice that they must comply with all applicable statutes and Commission orders, including general orders. The Commission does not need to issue a warning before it enforces the law.

## **6. Constitutional Limitations on Excessive Fines**

Under D.98-12-075, the Commission will adjust the size of fines to achieve the objective of deterrence, without becoming excessive, based on each utility's financial resources. We have set the penalty with this principle in mind.

## **7. Penalty**

In sum, based on the factors set forth above, we fine Edison \$20,000 for each of the 25 accidents where there was a nexus between the GO violation and the personal injury or property damage incurred, \$1,000 for each of 56 violations of GO 165, for failing to identify unsafe conditions, and \$20,000 for one GO 165 violation for exceeding GO 165's maximum inspection intervals, for a total fine of \$576,000.

## **XIII. Assignment of Proceeding**

Susan P. Kennedy is the Assigned Commissioner in this investigation and Janet A. Econome is the assigned Administrative Law Judge.

## **Findings of Fact**

1. The Commission does not expect utility systems to remain pristine and newly built 100% of the time; some deterioration is inevitable.
2. Although a utility may not be able to predict the precise manner and the exact time a particular piece of equipment or a facility will fail, deterioration is generally predictable, so a utility can determine when a particular class of equipment or facilities is likely to deteriorate to the point that safety or reliability is impaired.
3. Edison currently uses a five-tier maintenance priority system.
4. Some safety GO violations create more serious hazards than others.
5. Edison's maintenance priority system is flawed in that it creates a timetable for corrective action that may begin at the time a violation is noted.

6. The high voltage sign requirement is not only contained in GO 95 but also is a California statutory requirement in certain instances.

7. Although it may be dangerous for a worker to make a special trip to the primary power level solely to repair a high voltage sign, there may be less dangerous methods to achieve similar warnings.

8. The maximum interval between inspections pursuant to GO 165 is measured in years (i.e, 365 days increments).

9. Although there may be some subjectivity among CPSD inspectors, the record also demonstrated subjectivity among Edison employees as to what constitutes compliance with the GOs. The record demonstrates this is not a pervasive problem, and Edison did not specifically protest CPSD's audit findings at the time they were made.

10. It is impossible for a utility to keep its distribution system in full compliance with the safety GOs at all times, and, at any given time, there will be multiple violations on a utility's system.

11. The 37 accidents alleged by CPSD are described in detail in Appendix B. In three of these accidents, we find no GO violation as alleged by CPSD. In nine of the accidents, we find a GO violation, but no nexus between the violation and the injury. In 11 of the accidents, we find a GO violation and a nexus between the accident and property damage. In 14 of the accidents, we find a GO violation and a nexus between either personal injury or death

12. Edison did not contest CPSD's findings of "nonconformances" with GOs 95 and 128 at the time CPSD made them; in fact, once notified, Edison remedied these problems as required by CPSD. Based on these CPSD inspection results, we find 4,044 violations of GO 95 and 677 violations of GO 128.

13. We find 56 violations of GO 165 for Edison's failure to identify unsafe conditions, and one violation for exceeding GO 165's maximum inspection intervals.

14. We fine Edison \$576,000 based on a penalty of \$20,000 for each of the 25 accidents where there was a nexus between the GO violation and either personal injury or property damage, \$1,000 for each of the 56 violations of GO 165 for failure to identify unsafe conditions, and \$20,000 for one violation of exceeding GO 165's inspection intervals.

15. Based on the record, we cannot determine whether the 4,812 GO violations we find somehow compromise the integrity or safety of Edison's system, or whether these violations are the norm or are excessive (e.g., as compared to other similarly situated utilities.)

### **Conclusions of Law**

1. CPSD has the burden of proving by a preponderance of the evidence that Edison has violated the GOs and Rule 1.

2. GO 95 and 128 set both construction and maintenance standards.

3. Utilities are required to comply with relevant safety statutes, Commission GOs, and decisions, and the Commission has the statutory obligation to require utilities to do so.

4. If a utility fails to comply with a GO, it is violating that GO. The existence of a violation does not depend on the source of the violation.

5. The Commission has discretion in determining whether, and how much, to assess a utility for violations of the GOs.

6. The fact that utilities have limited resources, and that a utility may not be able to correct every violation instantly, does not eliminate the existence of a violation, but may in some cases be a factor in assessing penalties. Penalties may

also be imposed in order to encourage a utility to focus its system maintenance and repairs so as to prevent death, injury, and property damage.

7. Ideally, Edison should be inspecting for and repairing violations of GO 95 and 128, and also should be taking corrective action to the extent possible in order to forestall violations of the GOs.

8. Edison, in consultation with CPSD, should refine its maintenance priority system consistent with the discussion in Section VIII and IX of the Opinion.

9. If Edison believes the high voltage signs are no longer necessary, it should seek to change the applicable GOs and statutes to more meaningful criteria.

10. Edison and CPSD should meet and confer in a cooperative effort to determine whether adjustments to the high voltage sign requirement would achieve the same results as the sign. If useful alternatives emerge, the parties may raise them in R.01-10-001, or another appropriate forum, or in requesting legislative amendments. A similar exercise may be useful for other matters where Edison or CPSD believes that safety repairs pose a disproportionate risk to utility workers.

11. Edison is responsible for complying with the safety GOs at issue in this investigation and cannot escape this responsibility by delegating it to independent contractors. This responsibility is consistent with California law and Commission precedent.

12. As a general matter, to the extent Edison's own employees are responsible for a violation of the GOs, so too are the employees of Edison's independent contractors.

13. For purposes of the "due care" obligations in GOs 95 and 128, if, despite Edison management's best efforts at achieving on-the-job safety as defined in the Cal/OSHA criteria set forth in Section X.B of the Opinion, an employee is

spontaneously negligent, we would find no violation of the utility's "due care" obligations under these GOs.

14. Nothing in GO 165 relieves any utility from any requirements or obligations that it has under GOs 95 and 128.

15. Edison's violations of the GOs should not be excused because of the alleged subjectivity of CPSD inspectors.

16. While CPSD's past interpretation of GO compliance may be relevant in setting appropriate penalties, staff's interpretation of what is or is not a GO violation is not binding on the Commission.

17. As a general matter, if a GO violation has a nexus with an accident involving death, injury or property damage, a utility will incur penalties. If a utility fails to find GO safety violations in its detailed inspections, penalties may be appropriate because we want to ensure that the detailed inspection programs are thorough, and identify outstanding GO violations for repair.

18. For other observed GO violations which do not have a nexus with an accident causing damage, penalties may not be appropriate, provided a utility has a reasonable maintenance priority system to identify and repair violations and also promptly remedies any GO violations which CPSD brings to its attention within the timetable directed by CPSD. However, if CPSD demonstrates that the cumulative effect of such multiple GO violations on a utility's system compromises the system's safety or exceeds the norm, these facts would weigh in favor of imposing penalties for the violations, regardless of whether the violations have caused injury or damage.

19. The conclusions regarding Edison's GO violations set forth in Appendix B are adopted.

20. CPSD did not demonstrate that Edison engaged in either intentional, reckless, or grossly negligent conduct with respect to providing accident information to the Commission, and therefore we do not find Edison violated Rule 1.

21. Weighing the factors set forth in D.98-12-075, Appendix B (Penalty Guidelines), a fine of \$576,000 is warranted.

22. This investigation should be closed.

## **O R D E R**

### **IT IS ORDERED** that:

1. Southern California Edison Company (Edison) shall be fined \$576,000 for 25 violations of General Order (GO) 95 and GO 128 and 57 violations of GO 165.

2. No later than 30 days after the date this decision is mailed, Edison shall transmit the amount of the fine (\$576,000) payable to the California Public Utilities Commission. The portion of the fine attributable to GO 95 and GO 128 violations (\$500,000) shall then be deposited to the General Fund of the State of California. The portion of the fine attributable to GO 165 violations (\$76,000) shall be used to offset funding for the California Alternative Rates for Energy Program pursuant to Pub. Util. Code § 364(c). No later than 30 days after this decision is mailed, Edison shall submit an advice letter proposing an accounting method to accomplish this offset.

3. Edison, in consultation with the Commission's Consumer Protection and Safety Division (CPSD), shall refine its maintenance priority system consistent with the discussion in Sections VII and IX of the Opinion.

4. Edison and CPSD shall meet and confer in a cooperative effort to determine whether adjustments to the high voltage sign requirement would



achieve the same results as the sign. If useful alternatives emerge, the parties may raise them in Rulemaking 01-10-001, or another appropriate forum, or in requesting legislative amendments. A similar exercise may be useful for other items where Edison or CPSD believe that safety repairs pose a disproportionate risk to utility workers.

5. This investigation is closed.

This order is effective today.

Dated \_\_\_\_\_, at San Francisco, California.

**APPENDIX A**  
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**(END OF APPENDIX A)**

## **APPENDIX B-Accidents**

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#### **A. Accidents for Which Edison Alleges No Nonconformance**

##### **1. May 26, 1998 – Newbury Park**

In early 1998, Tri-County Landscape (Tri-County) performed corrosion repairs on Edison's pad-mount transformers in the Santa Ana District of Orange County. In connection with this work an Edison supervisor gave Tri-County a key to access the transformer panels in Santa Ana. Edison states that these transformers were dead-front transformers, i.e., they had no exposed high voltage conductors in excess of 750-Volts. Tri-County performed its work unsatisfactorily and by March 1998 Edison no longer used them. However, Tri-County failed to return the key to Edison.

In May 1998, Edison retained Precision Electric (Precision) to do work in Newbury Park, which is about 100 miles from Santa Ana. The work included repairing the casing of a pad-mount transformer, which required affixing sheet metal with pop rivets over a rusted area on the casing. According to Edison, this work was cosmetic and did not require access to the inside of the transformer box.

Edison states that Precision subcontracted this work to Tri-County without Edison's knowledge. The Tri-County employee selected to do the work, Jasso, was in possession of the transformer key that Edison previously gave Tri-County. According to Edison, he did not have to open the transformer front to do the work. Nevertheless, Jasso decided to open the transformer, which was energized, to see what parts needed to be replaced and to paint the inside of the door. He tried to use the key, which did not work. He then ground off the lock

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and opened the front. Jasso came in contact with energized conductors inside the transformer and sustained burns to his arms and knees.

CPSD determined that Edison's work request to the contractor did not clearly state that the transformer structures were not to be opened, nor did it warn the contractor about the presence of the exposed live conductors inside the structure. CPSD also states that Edison supplied locks to the contractor's employees to be used for locking the transformer casing after accessing the structures, thus indicating that Edison knew that non-Edison employees would be exposed to high voltage facilities but failed to determine whether they were qualified to do so. CPSD found Edison in violation of GO 128, Rule 17.1 which requires that owners of electric systems and their employees exercise due care to reduce to a minimum the hazard of accidental injury to their own or fellow employees, the public and other utilities, due to the presence of such systems. By allowing an unqualified contractor to access energized equipment, CPSD believes that Edison violated Rule 17.1.

Edison believes there is no Rule 17.1 violation because it was unaware that Tri-County was doing the work and had no knowledge that whoever performed the work would open the transformer. According to Edison, failing to retrieve the key from the Tri-County employee is not the cause of the injuries, because Jasso did not use the key to gain access to the transformer. Edison claims if there is any negligence, it is on the part of Precision or Tri-County, for which Edison is not liable.

However, Edison has instituted several new policies as a result of this accident, including clarifying its restrictions on whether contractors may subcontract Edison work and which subcontractors they may use. Edison is also

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more detailed in describing the repair work and who may open transformers. Edison has also increased supervision of these contractors and has re-emphasized to its supervisors to be vigilant about giving and retrieving keys to Edison's facilities from contractors.

Conclusion: Violation of GO 128, Rule 17.1 because Edison did not use due care in determining whether the contractor may subcontract Edison work and which subcontractors the contractor may use.

#### **2. June 21, 1998 – Lancaster**

A person was fatally injured when he climbed an Edison pole in Lancaster, coming in contact with an energized transformer fuse holder. This individual was alleged to be stealing Edison's property for salvage.

CPSD believes that Edison violated GO 95, Rule 31.6 which states that "lines or portions of lines permanently abandoned shall be removed by their owners so that such lines shall not become a public nuisance or a hazard to life or property." CPSD believes Edison violated Rule 31.6 when it failed to remove the equipment after service was disconnected, even though there were no pending new business meter orders for this location.

In investigating the accident, CPSD requested from Edison an explanation as to why the idle transformer had not been removed. Edison responded that there was an outstanding new business meter order for service. However, Edison could not provide a copy of this business order, and after months of follow-up, told CPSD that the facilities were idle with no pending work order for service. CPSD also alleges a Rule 1 violation for Edison's conduct during CPSD's investigation of this incident.

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Edison disagrees and believes that the line involved in the accident was not permanently abandoned. Pursuant to requests from a county inspector because a house was being demolished, Edison removed the meters and lines actually serving the house and pump. However, Edison did not receive any requests to remove the pole or distribution lines supported by the pole and did not do so. Edison reasoned that a customer might rebuild and it would, therefore, be uneconomic to remove this equipment.

Seven months passed between Edison's first receipt of the request to disconnect service and the accident. Edison argues that even if the property were permanently abandoned pursuant to Rule 31.6, that CPSD has not shown Edison's failure to remove the facilities within seven months is unreasonable. Edison also disputes CPSD's Rule 1 allegations.

Conclusion: Violation of GO 95, Rule 31.6 because Edison had removed the electrical equipment from the demolished house and had no outstanding request for a new meter order. For at least seven months, Edison did not make a reasonable inquiry to determine if the facilities were permanently abandoned (i.e., make inquiries of the current property owner, etc.). The Rule 1 allegations are discussed in the text of the decision.

### **3. August 29, 1998 – Hacienda Heights**

During an inspection on August 18, 1998, Edison's tree-trimming contractor Asplundh Tree Expert Company (Asplundh) observed the clearance between Edison's 12,000 volt conductor and Cypress tree branches at a house in Hacienda Heights was only six inches. Asplundh attempted to trim the trees at that location but was refused access to the property. Asplundh reported this

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denial of access to Edison, which planned to follow up with this property owner after Asplundh finished trimming the grid.

Eleven days after Asplundh attempted to trim the trees a fire occurred, apparently as a result of the cypress trees contacting Edison's conductors. The fire caused an outage that lasted about two days for about 10 customers. The only property damage caused by the fire was to Edison's facilities, and Edison repaired this damage. Shortly thereafter, the owner of the trees removed them before Edison's tree trimming personnel returned to the location.

CPSD believes that Edison violated GO 95, Rule 35 which requires a minimum clearance of 18 inches between conductors of 750 to 22,500 volts and vegetation, prior to Asplundh's inspection of the trees. Edison believes it is excused by the customer's denial of access.

Conclusion: Violation of GO 95, Rule 35 because the trees only had 6 inches of clearance at the time of Asplundh's inspection.

#### **4. September 16, 1998 – Santa Ana**

An employee of a demolition contractor received flash burns when an underground switch exploded. According to Edison, the contractor's employees working on the demolition removed the cover of the underground structure and then tried to remove the energized cables from inside the structure, causing the explosion.

The switch enclosure cover had recently broken due to trucks driving over it, but Edison received no notification of this. The evidence is conflicting as to whether Edison's name appeared on the switch enclosure cover. CPSD alleges Edison violated GO 128 which requires manholes, handholes, and subsurface

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equipment enclosures to be marked as to ownership to facilitate identification by persons authorized to work in the area.

Edison claims that the broken cover had an Edison marking, but even if it did not, the marking would not have made a difference because Edison's name was on the grade ring surrounding the cover and there were electrical diagrams on the switch.

Conclusion: Violation of GO 128. However, CPSD failed to establish a nexus between the missing signage and the injury because of the other visible Edison markings.

#### **5. December 10, 1998 – Corona**

An employee of an Edison contractor was replacing downed Edison 12,000-volt energized conductors when he came in contact with one of the conductors and suffered first degree burns to his hand and foot. CPSD found that Edison's Damage Assessment Team (DAT) had patrolled the same circuit and observed an unsafe condition (primary conductor attached to a steel bar using an insulated wire) but had failed to communicate this information to the contractor. CPSD found Edison in violation of GO 95, Rule 31.1 requiring owners and employees of electrical systems to exercise due care to minimize the hazard of accidental injury to their own or follow employees.

Edison explains that the accident occurred after a severe windstorm. DAT identified the downed conductors but the troubleman went to the area in the dark and was unable to observe the downed power lines, and did not receive DAT's report. Edison also explains that the injured worker directly caused the injury because he may have been backhanding it to see if it was energized. This practice is against industry rules.



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Conclusion: Violation of GO 95, Rule 31.1. Edison violated Rule 31.1 by failing to advise the contractor that the downed lines were energized.

#### **6. August 27, 1999 – Hesperia**

In August 1999, an eight-acre brush fire ignited in Hesperia, originating from an Edison triplex (a three-wire insulated service drop) cable with insulation that deteriorated from contact with an elm tree. CPSD found Edison in violation of GO 95, Rule 35, which requires a utility that has actual knowledge of evidence of tree abrasion on circuits of 0–750 volts to correct this problem by certain designated actions.

Edison argues that it did not violate Rule 35 because it had not found any evidence of tree abrasion either when it trimmed the tree less than a year before the fire or two months before the incident on a circuit patrol, and thus did not have actual knowledge of the abrasion as required by Rule 35. Edison explains that it has emphasized the importance of detailed inspection for abrasions to all patrol personnel to help prevent possible future occurrences.

Conclusion: No violation of GO 95, Rule 35 because CPSD did not demonstrate that Edison had actual knowledge of the condition as defined by the Rule.

#### **7. November 5, 1999 – Palm Springs**

On November 5, 1999, a palm tree burned, causing a fire, which damaged two sheds, landscaping, and the roof of a motel. Edison reported the accident to CPSD on March 14, 2000. CPSD found that the palm tree came in contact with Edison's 4000-volt conductor, thus causing the fire and alleges a violation of GO 95, Rule 35, which requires an 18-foot clearance between conductors of 750-22,500 volts and vegetation to be maintained at all times. CPSD also found

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Edison out of compliance with Decision (D.) 96-11-004, Appendix B, which requires Edison to report such accidents to the Commission within two hours of the utility's becoming aware of the accident.

Edison states that it trimmed a palm at the same address about two months before the accident. There were four palms in the area and it is unknown whether the previously trimmed tree, or another of the palms, caught fire. The fire department found that during breezy conditions, one of the trees blew into the primary facilities causing an arc and subsequent fire. Edison seemingly disputes the fire department's report, claiming the cause of the fire is of unknown origin, and one witness describes the fire as burning up the tree.

Edison first learned of the incident in February 2000, and subsequently attempted to obtain more information from the insurance company. Edison confirmed the incident with the fire department on March 14, 2000 and reported the incident to the Commission on the same day.

Conclusion: Violation of GO 95, Rule 35, influenced by the fire department's finding of the cause of the fire. Also a violation of D.96-11-004 because Edison failed to inform the Commission of the accident until about a month after it learned of it.

#### **8. November 19, 1999 – Valencia**

A three-member Edison crew was injured from a flash, which occurred when they cut into an energized 16,000-volt underground cable.

The crew members suffered second- and third-degree burns to their arms and faces.

CPSD found that the Edison crew identified, de-energized, and tagged a cable, which they believed was the cable they needed to isolate. The crew then

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began to cut into another cable, assuming it was the cable they had de-energized. According to CPSD, this incorrect assumption was due to the fact that Edison records did not reflect the existence of two cables at the incident location.

CPSD alleges that Edison violated GO 128, Rule 17.1, which requires owners of underground electric supply systems and their employees at all times to exercise due care to reduce to a minimum the hazard of accidental injury to their own or fellow employees.

Edison states that the map reflected both cables, but admits that the map was geographically inaccurate. Nonetheless, Edison believes it did not violate the due care provisions of GO 128 because the crews know the maps to be geographically inaccurate and the crew followed all safety rules and industry practices.

Conclusion: Violation of GO 128, Rule 17.1 because the map, which was provided to the crew shortly before the accident, did not reflect the correct geographic location of both cables. We note that after the accident, Edison has implemented further safety procedures to prevent this type of accident from reoccurring, such as distributing a bulletin to the workers emphasizing: (a) the safety precautions to be followed in troubleshooting and testing underground cables; (b) wearing protective gear and staying out of the dig hole and as far away as possible from the opening during spiking; and (3) advising review of inventory maps as a supplement to circuit maps because the later are electrically correct but not necessarily geographically accurate.

#### **9. December 20, 1999 - Baldwin Park**

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Two Edison employees were working on the top of a pole located near the Central Elementary School when the pole collapsed causing them both to fall and lose consciousness. The two employees suffered head and back injuries.

CPSD found that a four-foot deep trench was dug down to the base of the pole in preparation for the installation of conduit for Edison-owned cable, which trench affected the pole's integrity and stability. CPSD also found that the depth of the pole did not meet the pole depth requirements in GO 95, Table 6. CPSD therefore found that Edison violated GO 95, Table 6 as well as GO 95, Rule 31.1, which requires owners and employees of electric systems to exercise due care to minimize the hazard of accidental injury.

Edison disputes CPSD's conclusion, arguing that what caused the accident was the workers failing to inspect the pole before climbing it, as required by Edison's safety practices. Edison argues that even if Rule 31.1 were relevant, Edison complied with it through its commitment to employee safety training and compliance.

Conclusion: Violation of GO 95. The due care rule requires both the utility and its employees to exercise due care to minimize the hazard of accidental injury and here, Edison's employees failed to follow Edison's own safety procedures.

#### **10. January 28, 2000 – Agoura**

An employee of an Edison contractor, Sturgeon Electric (Sturgeon) was installing a crossarm on a new Edison pole in Agoura. As the Sturgeon employee tried to place the crossarm in position, a bonded insulator pin on the crossarm contacted a 16,000-volt conductor. The contact created a flash, causing

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first- and second-degree burns to the employee. Sturgeon later fired the employee for failing to adhere to safety rules.

CPSD found that the employee violated several safety rules and the employee's supervisor who was at the scene did not correct his conduct. CPSD alleges that Edison therefore violated GO 95, Rule 31.1, which requires owners and employees of electrical systems to exercise due care to reduce to a minimum the hazard of accidental injury to their own or fellow employees, to the public and other utilities. Edison does not dispute that the employee's conduct caused the accident but states that it does not owe a duty of care or liability for injury to an independent contractor's employee arising from the contractor's conduct.

Conclusion: Violation of GO 95. The due care rule requires both the utility and its employees to exercise due care to minimize the hazard of accidental injury, and here, Edison's independent contractor's employee violated several safety rules and the employee's supervisor who was at the scene did not correct his conduct.

Edison is responsible for compliance with the GOs. Although Edison may contract with independent contractors to do its work, it cannot delegate its GO responsibility to an independent contractor so as to insulate Edison from liability for failure to comply with the GOs.

#### **11. March 1, 2000 – Emerald Bay**

An employee of a contractor installing water drainage basins was injured when he cut into an Edison underground PVC conduit containing 12,000-volt cables. The employee had assumed the conduit was an abandoned water line. He sustained second-degree burns to his right arm.

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CPSD found that the contractor had requested a facility mark-out for the excavation through Underground Service Area (USA), a one-call system. USA notifies utilities in the area of the pending permit to dig, and the utilities are required to go to the site and mark the location of their facilities. Edison contracted with the Underground Technology Incorporated (UTI) to mark the facilities on its behalf. UTI's technician was unable to find Edison's aperture card for this location and used only visible structures in the area to locate the underground conductors. As a result, he located and marked only the conductors running in an east-west direction but failed to locate and mark the north-south conductors.

CPSD states that Edison failed to mark its underground cable correctly, and is therefore in violation of GO 128, Rule 17.7.

Rule 17.7 provides in pertinent part as follows:

“Each party operating or owning facilities shall, upon request, provide information as to location of its underground facilities to any other party contemplating underground construction or work, in the vicinity thereof. Provision of such information by a party will not relieve such other party of his responsibility to locate accurately such underground facilities and to exercise reasonable care during construction or work.”

Edison believes it did not violate GO 128 because it is not responsible for the independent failure of its contractor to properly perform contracted work. Edison also argues that the party doing the excavation work, and not Edison, has ultimate responsibility for verifying the actual location of the cable.

Conclusion: Violation of GO 128. Edison is responsible for complying with the GOs. Although Edison may contract with independent contractors to

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do its work, it cannot delegate its GO responsibility to an independent contractor so as to insulate Edison from liability for failure to comply with the GOs.

#### **12. April 7, 2000 – Rancho Palos Verdes**

Two Edison employees were burned when they started working on an energized pad-mounted transformer in Rancho Palos Verdes. One employee, Hulstein, suffered fatal injuries, and the second employee, Romano, suffered second- and third-degree burns. Another Edison employee sustained minor burns when he came to the aid of the two employees.

CPSD found that the Hulstein and Romano did not receive clear instructions from their supervisor, who was on the site, regarding the equipment on which the work was performed. CPSD also found that both employees were not using personal protective equipment or tools to perform the work.

CPSD alleges that Edison violated GO 128, Rule 17.1, which requires owners of electric supply systems and their employees at all times to exercise due care to reduce to a minimum the hazard of accidental injury to their own or fellow employees.

Edison explains that due to the emergency nature of the repairs, they were being conducted around midnight. Edison states that the supervisor held several instructional briefings (tailboards) with the crew before it commenced work, going to each of the three transformers and instructing the crew which were energized and which were not. According to Edison, the employees were injured when they inexplicably went to transformer 1 instead of the transformer they had been working on (number 3) to install the elbow. Edison states it is unknown why they went to transformer 1 since the tailboards indicated that everything on it was energized, they were never instructed to do work on it, and

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they were instructed to place the elbows on transformer 3. Edison states that after the explosion, the supervisor heard Hulstein say, "I f-----d up, Mark. I hurt that kid. Save Juan and let me die."

Edison also states that Cal/OSHA determined that Edison did not contribute to this incident and declined to impose penalties on Edison. According to Edison, Cal/OSHA concluded that Hulstein knew the requirements of Edison's safety program but failed to follow those rules.

Conclusion: No violation of GO 128. CPSD did not prove a nexus between Edison's actions and the employees' injuries.

### **B. Accidents for Which Edison Alleges Nonconformance But No Causation**

#### **1. November 14, 1998-Altadena**

Professional tree trimmer for a landscaping company, Cortez, contacted the 16,000-volt conductors while using a saw attached to a 7-foot 3 ½-inch conductive aluminum swimming pool pole. He was burned and fatally injured. CPSD found that the crossarm on the Edison pole supporting the conductors did not have a high voltage sign as required by GO 95, and alleges that Edison violated GO 95, Rule 51.6A which requires poles that support line conductors of more than 750 volts to be marked with high voltage signs.

Cortez was a professional tree trimmer and foreman for his employer. He previously told his co-worker to be careful around power lines and was wearing safety gear at the time of the accident. Also, an undamaged high voltage sign was on the other cross arm of the same pole, less than 50 feet from the tree Cortez was trimming.

Conclusion: Violation of GO 95. However, CPSD did not prove a nexus between the missing high voltage sign and the injury.



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#### **2. November 17, 1998- Camarillo**

Edison lineman Stubbs was working on a pad-mounted transformer in Camarillo when he contacted an energized 16,000-volt conductor. Stubbs received third-degree burns to his right hand and left finger. CPSD alleges that the pad-mounted structure, which contained exposed 16,000-volt conductors, did not have warning signs posted inside the structure, and that Edison was therefore in violation of GO 128, Rule 35.3 which requires warning signs indicating high voltage to be installed inside pad-mounted transformer compartments containing exposed live parts above 750 volts.

Stubbs was an experienced lineman and prior electrical crew foreman who had worked for Edison for 21 years and was aware that the transformer contained exposed energized components. Moreover, although the transformer did not have high voltage warning signs installed inside its box, high voltage warning signs were installed on the exterior.

Conclusion: Violation of GO 128. However, CPSD did not prove a nexus between the missing high voltage sign and the experienced lineman's injury.

#### **3. November 23, 1998 – Rancho Palos Verdes**

An employee of California Communications Company (CCC), a contractor for a cable television company, was installing a copper ground rod and came in contact with Edison's underground 12,000-volt cable. The employee sustained second- and third-degree burns to his back, wrist, and lower leg.

CPSD found that the contractor had requested a facility mark-out of the work area through USA. USA notifies all utilities in the area of the pending permit to dig, and the utilities are required to go to the site and mark the location of their facilities. Edison has contracted with the UTI to locate the underground

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facilities in its service area, providing UTI with copies of its underground maps, aperture cares, and cable locating equipment. UTI marked the approximate location of the cable.

CPSD states that Edison failed to mark its underground cable correctly, and is therefore in violation of GO 128, Rule 17.7, which is quoted in the Emerald Bay accident discussion above.

Edison states it satisfied its GO 128 obligation to locate this underground facility by providing UTI with the information necessary to determine the facility's approximate location as defined by Government Code § 4216 (i.e., within designated dimensions which does not include depth). Edison also explains that it is not responsible for UTI's errors of failing to accurately locate the facilities. According to Edison, it is also not responsible for CCC's failures to properly locate the facilities under Rule 17.7, nor to provide the employee with the proper training. Edison cites to a Cal/OSHA report finding that CCC failed to provide the employee with any training, and argues that the employee arbitrarily placed the rod in a spot located in the middle of the wires without checking for any Edison markings or trying to ascertain the location of the Edison cable.

Conclusion: No violation. CPSD did not prove a nexus between Edison's actions and the worker's injury, because the record did not establish that Edison or its independent contractor inaccurately located the facilities (as opposed to the CCC employee's error occurring through lack of proper training.) However, we do not agree with Edison that it has no responsibility for a GO violation if its independent contractor, and not Edison, violated the GO. (See our conclusion in the Emerald Bay accident discussion, number 11 above.)

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#### **4. December 18, 1998- Inglewood**

Tree trimmer Morales was trimming and removing a rubber tree with an 18-foot 3-inch long aluminum pruning pole near Edison's 16,000-volt conductors when he was fatally injured by coming in contact with the conductors. Morales was an experienced tree trimmer who had previously trimmed this tree and knew to be careful near high voltage wires. The CPSD inspector found that at the time of the accident, Edison's 16,000-volt conductors were in contact with the rubber tree.

CPSD alleges that Edison violated GO 95, Rules 35, which requires a minimum of 18 inches to be maintained between conductors of 750 to 22,500 volts and vegetation at all times, and Rule 51.6 A, which requires poles that support line conductors of more than 750 volts to be marked with high voltage signs.

CPSD has not demonstrated that an absence of a high voltage sign contributed to the injuries because Morales was an experienced tree trimmer who had previously trimmed that same tree and knew to use care around the wires in question.

The evidence is conflicting on the alleged violation of Rule 35 requiring Edison to keep a minimum of an 18-inch clearance between the high voltage wire and the tree. CPSD asserts that at the time of the accident, Edison's 16,000-volt conductors were in contact with the rubber tree. Based on information presented in the wrongful death case, Edison claims this information is based on a letter from the apartment owner to CPSD, which letter in turn is based on information Morales told the apartment owner when he solicited work from them. Edison states that its contractor had trimmed the tree six months before the accident

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about five to six feet back from the conductors. Edison's tree expert determined the tree had grown only two to four feet since the trim six months before the accident, and thus, no branches of the tree were within 18 inches of the conductor. Edison was not found to be liable in a subsequent wrongful death case.

Conclusion: One violations of GO 95 for a missing high voltage sign. However, CPSD did not prove that Edison failed to keep a minimum of an 18-inch clearance between the rubber tree and the high voltage wire. CPSD also failed to establish a nexus between the missing high voltage sign and the tree trimmer's injury.

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#### **5. February 5, 1999 – Corona**

A worker installing a concrete streetlight pole was injured while in the process of installing a marbelite streetlight pole. A crane was lifting a pole and while the worker was positioning it, the pole came in contact with Edison's 12,000-volt overhead conductors. The day was one poor visibility and the workers were all aware of the proximity of high voltage lines to the work.

CPSD found that the south face crossarm of the pole north of the point of contact did not have a high voltage sign and therefore Edison violated GO 95, Rule 51.6 which requires marking of poles supporting conductors of more than 750-Volts.

Conclusion: Violation of GO 95. However, CPSD failed to establish a nexus between the missing sign and the injury.

#### **6. July 20, 1999 – Long Beach**

A contractor working for Los Angeles County was installing a sewer main in Long Beach. While boring holes in the asphalt roadway, the auger equipment that was being used came in contact with Edison's underground 12,000-volt cable. One of the contractor's employees was injured in the resulting explosion, receiving second-degree burns to his face, upper chest, and right arm.

CPSD found that the contractor had requested facility mark-out of the work area, but Edison's marking and locating contractor, UTI, failed to mark the 12,000-volt cable. CPSD also found the aperture cards that Edison provided to UTI to be used for locating and marking Edison's facilities were inaccurate.

CPSD found Edison in violation of GO 128, Rule 17.7 which requires each party operating or owning underground electric facilities to provide, upon request, facility location information to any party contemplating underground

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work in the vicinity of its underground facilities. (The relevant portion of Rule 17.7 is quoted in the Emerald Bay discussion in Section A.11 above.) CPSD also found Edison in violation of GO 128, Rule 17.7A, which requires each party operating or owning facilities to maintain necessary records to comply with Rule 17.7.

Rule 17.7 A provides:

“The responsibility for the maintenance of necessary records to comply with this rule rests with the party owning or operating the facilities. Such records shall be available for inspection at all times by the Commission or the Commission staff.”

Edison states that these “technical infractions” may have occurred, but the responsibility for the accident ultimately lies with Edison’s contractor and with the contractor whose employees were injured. Because Rule 17.7 states that provision of information regarding the location of an underground facility by a party does not relieve the requesting party of the responsibility to locate accurately such underground facilities, Edison argues that the failure independently to verify the location of the subject facilities was an independent intervening cause of the accident that cut off any causal link with Edison.

Conclusion: Violation of GO 128, Rules 17.7 and 17.1. CPSD has met its nexus burden. Edison is responsible for complying with the GOs. Although Edison may contract with independent contractors to do its work, it cannot delegate its GO responsibility to an independent contractor so as to insulate Edison from liability for failure to comply with the GOs. Edison’s compliance should include providing accurate information as to the location of its underground facilities to any other party contemplating underground

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construction or work, in the vicinity thereof, and maintaining the necessary records (i.e., accurate records) to comply with this request.

#### **7. July 23, 1999 – Sun City**

Two young men aged 15 and 18 broke into an Edison pad-mounted structure. The young men pried off the security lock, removed a clear Plexiglas safety panel that had three high voltage signs installed on its surface, and used a wooden stick to dislodge the internal fuse. As a result, one of the youths received flash burns.

CPSD states that Edison violated GO 128, Rules 35.3 which requires warning signs on the exterior surface of pad-mounted structures containing exposed live parts above 750 volts.

Conclusion: Violation of GO 128. However, CPSD failed to establish a nexus between the missing high voltage sign and the injury when the young men would have seen three additional high voltage warning signs after they broke in and these signs did not deter their tampering with the facilities.

#### **8. September 19, 1999-Monrovia**

Wallick used an aluminum pole to try to retrieve his son's toy, a water pressure rocket, that was caught and hung on a 16,000 volt line attached to an Edison pole. In order to access the pole, Wallick first scaled a block wall and climbed a chain link fence. Then he climbed up the pole, straddling a telephone guard arm. Using the aluminum pole, he contacted the rocket several times and at some point contacted the conductor with his aluminum pole, and sustained third-degree burns to about 60% of his body.

CPSD states Edison violated GO 95, rule 51.6A because the crossarm on the pole supporting the 16,000-Volt conductors did not have a high voltage

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marking. Edison admits that the sign was missing, but states the pole had five other sets of high voltage signs that Wallick should have seen climbing the pole.

Conclusion: Violation of GO 95. However, CPSD failed to establish a nexus between the violation and Wallick's injury, when Wallick should have seen other high voltage signs, which did not deter his behavior.

#### **9. November 20, 1999 – Pomona**

An Edison lineman was climbing a pole in order to transfer existing overhead facilities to a new pole. The lineman lost his footing and fell 20 feet to the ground, injuring his legs. CPSD found the pole was not stepped, and found Edison in violation of GO 95, Rule 91.3 which requires joint poles with vertical risers or runs to be stepped.

Edison states that when it first installed the pole in the early 1990s, it was not a joint pole and thus did not have to be stepped. Edison explains that it is industry custom and practice in California for the cable and telephone companies that subsequently installed their risers and thus, turned it into a jointly used pole, to step the risers. Edison claimed that it did not know, nor should it have known, that the other entities had added risers to the pole without stepping it. Edison also states that there is no evidence that the lack of steps caused the lineman to fall, but offers no competing theory of injury.

Conclusion: Violation of GO 95.

#### **10. August 11, 2000 – Cypress**

A roof framer working on the roof of a newly constructed house came in contact with an Edison 12,000-volt conductor and fell from the roof striking a block wall below. He suffered second- and third-degree burns.



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CPSD found the vertical clearance of the 12,000-volt conductor over the roof was less than 10 feet and did not meet the minimum clearance requirement of 12 feet specified by GO 95. CPSD also found that Edison was aware that the house was being constructed at the location under its power lines.

Edison explains that it notified the contractors of the dangers of building near power lines and that it should contact Edison before starting any framing. The contractor contacted Edison, and Edison started the framing in early July, did not see any evidence of framing at that time, only to be pulled off the job and rescheduled for its work throughout July and early August. Edison had not returned to complete the work before the accident occurred.

Conclusion: Violation of GO 95. However, CPSD did not establish a nexus between this violation and the injuries because the contractor knew to contact Edison to relocate the wires before the framing was to begin and failed to do so.

#### **11. September 18, 2000 – Monterey Park**

A painter, Daniel Yeager, standing in a metal painter's swing attached to the wall, contacted Edison's 16,000-volt conductor with a metal painting pole. The painter received flash burns on his chest and arms.

The painter's employer had warned Yeager to be careful when working around the power lines, and Yeager had worked in construction nearly his entire working life. Coworkers also knew the wires were dangerous.

CPSD alleges Edison violated GO 95, Rule 51.6 because the crossarm supporting the 16,000-Volt conductor did not have high voltage markings.

Conclusion: Violation of GO 95. However, CPSD failed to establish a nexus between the violation and Yeager's injury when the worker was aware of the hazards of contacting the high voltage lines.

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#### **C. Accidents for Which Edison Alleges Nonconformance and Causation But No Inspection Violation**

##### **Summary**

This section briefly summarizes the accidents in which Edison admits there was a nonconformance, or a failure of Edison to comply, with a GO and causation (i.e., the failure to comply with the GO had a nexus to the injuries sustained.) As discussed in the text of this decision, failure to comply with a GO is a violation thereof. We therefore find violations of the GO for the following accidents based on Edison's own admission. However, we briefly summarize the accidents because some of the facts are relevant for our overall penalty discussion.

##### **1. October 15, 1998 – Alhambra**

A lineman working for a cable television company's contractor contacted an energized Edison ground wire and a grounded guy wire while working on a pole. He received an electric shock and fell 15 feet to the ground, suffering fractures to his left arm and rib.

CPSD found that the portion of Edison's ground wire that the lineman contacted had damaged covering and was exposed. CPSD therefore found Edison in violation of GO 95, Rule 54.6, which requires ground wires attached to poles to be covered through their length by a suitable protective covering.

Edison claimed that it could not have discovered the problem in circuit patrols, and this area was not subject to detail inspections at the time of the accident. Edison further explains that other actions (a defective wiring of the nearby air conditioner, Pacific Bell's tapping into Edison's ground wire, and the lineman's failure to wear protective clothing) led to the accident.

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#### **2. September 19, 1999 – Simi Valley**

A palm tree caught fire in Simi Valley. CPSD found that the fire was caused by the tree's contact with Edison's 16,000-volt conductor, and that Edison violated GO 95, Rule 35, which requires an 18-inch clearance between conductors of 750–22,000 volts and vegetation to be maintained at all times.

Edison states that it trimmed the tree on December 17, 1998 in accordance with established tree-trimming procedures, and on August 19, 1999, patrolled the circuit that included this area and noted no problems with the palm tree's clearance with the conductors. No structures or other property burned in this accident and Edison trimmed the tree after the fire was extinguished and removed it about two weeks later.

#### **3. November 15, 1999 – Pomona**

A fire damaged an apartment complex in Pomona. CPSD states the fire started when a portion of Edison's 12,000-volt conductor fell across the garages located in the alley at the rear of the complexes. CPSD found that the conductor failed at the splice from material fatigue and that Edison violated GO 95, Rules 44.1 and 44.2, which require safety factors to be maintained for conductors and equipment.

Edison states that the conductor was installed in 1960 and inspected as part of a circuit patrol on April 28, 1999. Edison further believes that CPSD speculates that metal fatigue of the conductor caused it to fail, but it is unknown what caused the failure. Because Edison conducted a circuit patrol of the area a few months before the accident, and because Edison had no actual knowledge that the safety factor had been reduced below the minimum requirement, Edison does not believe it violated the GO.

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#### **4. May 1, 2000 – Orange**

A telephone company technician was working from a ladder on a pole when she came in contact with an exposed Edison ground wire. She received a shock and fell 12 feet to the ground, sustaining a cracked pelvic bone and sacrum and hand injuries. CPSD found that the ground moulding covering the Edison ground wire was broken, causing the ground wire to be exposed. Therefore, CPSD alleges Edison violated GO 95, Rule 54.4 B which requires electric supply system ground wires attached to the surface of poles to be covered throughout their length.

Edison states that it conducted a circuit patrol of the area on May 29, 1999, but circuit patrols typically do not detect this type of problem. Edison had not yet conducted a detailed inspection of the area. Thus, Edison states that it was unaware that the condition existed. Although Edison concedes that the broken ground moulding may have contributed to the accident, Edison argues that the telephone company technician's action was the primary contributing cause of the accident, because she was aware of the broken ground wire moulding before the accident. Additionally, according to Edison, she did not test the pole for voltage, nor was she using proper safety equipment.

#### **5. May 29, 2000 – Santa Fe Springs**

A fire ignited in Santa Fe Springs when tree fronds from a palm tree came in contact with Edison's 12,000-volt conductor. This resulted in fault current traveling down the line, causing the conductor to fall onto a garage. Fault current then went through the metal flashing on the roof, causing fire damage to the eaves and damaging appliances inside.

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CPSD found Edison violated GO 95, Rule 35, which requires that a 19-inch clearance be maintained at all times between conductors of 750–22,500 volts and vegetation.

Edison states it trimmed the tree on May 29, 1998, and inspected it on a circuit patrol again on April 16, 1999. Edison states it did not note a clearance problem in its circuit patrol. Edison disagrees with CPSD's conclusion that Edison did not adequately trim the tree, but instead believes that the tree may have simply grown more than expected after its last trim.

#### **6. July 3, 2000 – Inglewood**

An 11-year-old girl attending a swimming pool party came in contact with an Edison service drop wire while climbing a swimming pool slide ladder and was fatally injured. CPSD found that the service drop had only three feet of vertical clearance above the pool slide ladder, the covering on the service drop conductors had deteriorated, and the conductors were bare. CPSD stated that the last circuit patrol of the area was April 29, 1999.

CPSD alleges Edison violated GO 95, Rule 37 which requires an eight-foot vertical service drop clearance over walkable surfaces and Rule 49.4 which requires service drop conductors to be covered. CPSD also found Edison in violation of GO 165 for exceeding the one-year maximum period between circuit patrols.

Edison states that although the homeowner noticed a drooping wire, she did not call Edison to report a problem. However, two days prior to the accident, the homeowner called Edison to report a partial lights problem and then called again to say that the power had been restored.

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Edison states that what caused the wire to droop above the pool slide ladder was the mechanical failure of parts supporting the wire. In addition, the weather-resistant covering had worn away in the area where the child contacted the wires. Edison states the area had not yet had a detailed inspection, and states it had no notice of the condition because it had occurred just days earlier and the homeowner did not report it.

Edison believes it complied with GO 165's inspection requirements because it followed an annual inspection cycle (i.e., it conducted a circuit patrol in 1999 and 2000.) Moreover, according to Edison, an early circuit patrol would not have prevented the accident because circuit patrols are not designed to discover deteriorated coverings.

#### **7. July 31, 2000 – Montclair**

An employee of a wireless communication company was installing a wireless FM receiver on a street light pole when he made contact with an Edison 12,000-volt conductor with a metal strap. The employee suffered second- and third-degree burns to his forearm and left hand.

CPSD found that the Edison 12,000-volt conductors were passing directly above the street light pole with a vertical clearance of 4 feet and 5 inches. CPSD therefore alleges that Edison violated GO 95, Rule 37, which requires a minimum six-foot radial clearance between supply conductors of 750–22,500 volts and street light poles.

Edison states that at the time of the accident, the pole supporting the conductors was leaning about five degrees to the south, creating slack in the affected span. Edison states that Comcast Cable Company, which rented space on the pole, had caused the condition earlier in the year when it installed a new

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communication cable in this span, but had not informed Edison of the problem. Edison states it was therefore unaware of the problem and had not had the opportunity to discover it through its annual GO 165 inspection cycle. Edison also believes the injured employee's employer contributed to the accident by incorrectly representing to the employee that any electrical exposure he might receive in installing devices would be of a low voltage. In fact, CalOSHA cited the employer for safety violations.

#### **8. August 8, 2000 – Apple Valley**

A fire ignited in Apple Valley causing damage to about 90 feet of the property's wooden fence. CPSD found the fire was caused by a "triplex" service drop cable with insulation that was deteriorated from contact with a tree. CPSD also found that on August 6, 2000, an Edison troubleman had discovered that the insulation on the service drop had deteriorated and had made a temporary repair with the intent of replacing the triplex on August 10. CPSD alleges Edison violated GO 95, Rule 35, which requires tree abrasion conditions on circuits of 0-750 volts to be corrected by slacking or rearranging the line, trimming the tree, or placing mechanical protection on the conductor.

Edison states that the reason that the permanent repairs were scheduled for August 10 was that was the first day a four-wheel drive vehicle, which was necessary to make the repairs, was available. Edison further states that the accident was not caused by Edison's temporary repairs, but rather by the tree coming in contact with the triplex service conductor.

#### **9. October 12, 2000 – Valencia**

An Edison lineman installing new conductors on an Edison pole was injured when the new, de-energized 66,000-volt conductor he was installing

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came in contact with energized 16,000-volt conductors installed on the same pole one level below. The lineman suffered second- and third-degree burns to his face, hands, neck and upper torso.

CPSD found that the Edison crew working on the installation did not de-energize the 16,000-volt conductors and only covered one of its phases with an insulated covering, even though all three phases were in the vicinity of the work area. CPSD alleges Edison violated GO 95, Rule 31.1, which requires owners and employees of electrical systems at all times to exercise due care to reduce to a minimum the hazard of accidental injury to their own or fellow employees.

Edison admits that its foreman failed to follow Edison's work rules and to exercise due care, although Edison states the foreman was properly instructed by Edison. Edison disciplined the foreman and took steps to ensure that type of accident would not happen again. Edison claimed that nothing it could have reasonably done prior to the accident would have prevented it.

#### **10. December 14, 2000 – Palm Springs**

A fire burned 40 acres of grass and vegetation in Ventura. The fire was ignited when 16,000-volt Edison conductors broke and fell to the ground. CPSD found that the through bolt supporting a crossarm with 16,000-volt conductors broke, causing the crossarm to be supported by only two metal flat bars. According to CPSD, this resulted in a shock loading effect, causing the conductors to oscillate and one conductor to break from the insulators and fall to the ground. CPSD alleges Edison violated GO 95, Rules 44.1 and 44.2 which specify the minimum safety factors to be established and maintained for crossarms and pole line hardware.



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Edison believes that there was nothing it was required to do under its inspection program to discover that the anchor rod was corroded and would fail, and that CPSD did not prove any negligent act or omission of Edison caused the accident. Edison argues that although the guy wire supporting the pole detached from its anchor and the underground portion of the pole was rotten, neither of these conditions caused the pole to break. According to Edison, what caused the pole to fall over was the unpredictable breaking of the anchor rod 8 feet below the surface, and that because of the broken anchor rod, the pole would have broken even if it were new. Edison states that it has investigated ways to examine underground anchor rods for corrosion, but has found no method to ascertain their condition. Edison is monitoring future incidents involving anchor rods but to date has not noted an increased rate of failure for these rods.

#### **11. December 19, 2000 – Ventura**

A fire burned 40 acres of grass and vegetation in Ventura. CPSD's investigation found that the through bolt supporting a crossarm with 16,000-volt conductors broke, causing the crossarm to be supported by only two metal flat bars. This resulted in a shock loading effect, causing the conductors to oscillate and one conductor to break from the insulators and fall to the ground. CPSD alleges Edison violated GO 95, Rules 44.1 and 44.2, which specify the minimum safety factors to be established and maintained for crossarms and pole line hardware.

Edison believes the failure of the bolt was spontaneous and unpredictable, and that it did not have the opportunity to discover or remedy the condition under its established inspection program. Edison states the last circuit patrol

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occurred on September 8, 2000, within the required timeframe for circuit patrols. Edison is monitoring its incident reports to determine if a pattern or increased failure of this type of bolt occurs. So far, none has been reported.

#### **D. Accidents for Which Edison Alleges Nonconformance, Causation, and a Failure to Detect/Remedy**

##### **Summary**

This section briefly summarizes the accidents in which Edison admits there was a nonconformance, or a failure of Edison to comply, with a GO, causation (i.e., the failure to comply with the GO had a nexus to the injuries sustained) and the failure of Edison to detect or remedy the situation. As discussed in the text of this decision, failure to comply with a GO is a violation thereof. Therefore, we find violations of the GO for the following accidents based on Edison's own admission. However, we briefly summarize the accidents because some of the facts are relevant for our overall penalty discussion.

##### **1. April 16, 1998 – Marina Del Rey**

An aboveground pad-mounted transformer failed, resulting in an explosion and fire. The explosion caused several windows in a nearby condominium to break. Fortunately, no one was near the transformer or injured when the explosion occurred.

CPSD found the transformer failed due to low oil level caused by a corrosion leak. CPSD found the transformer was last inspected on February 26, 1998, that the inspection crew noted at that time that the transformer was leaking badly, and that actions had to be taken as soon as possible. CPSD states that Edison failed to take appropriate action. CPSD

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alleges that Edison violated GO 128, Rule 12.2 which requires Edison to maintain systems in a condition which will secure safety to the public and property.

Edison states that due to human error, the information stating that it was necessary to take action on this transformer as soon as possible was not recorded into Edison's on-line Automated Grid Maintenance System (AGMS), nor was an Additional Repair Request generated concerning the transformer, as required by Edison's Operation and Maintenance Manual. Edison states that even though it endeavors to maintain its system in a safe condition at all times, once in a while, through human error, a standard procedure is not followed. Edison also states that it has taken additional measures to emphasize to its employees the rules and procedures they must follow for proper maintenance of facilities.

#### **2. October 5, 1998 – Ontario**

A palm tree came in contact with Edison's 12,000-volt conductors causing a fire that damaged a fence, shrubs, and grass in Ontario. CPSD found that the palm tree was listed on Edison's line clearing records to be trimmed on August 18, 1998 but that Edison failed to trim the tree.

CPSD found Edison violated GO 95, Rule 35, which requires a minimum clearance of 18 inches to be maintained at all times between conductors of 750 to 22,500 volts and vegetation.

Edison states that it timely attempted to obtain permission from the property owner to remove the tree because it grew near Edison's power lines, but was unsuccessful. Edison delayed in trimming the tree so that the utility and property owner could negotiate the tree's removal. A month and one half later, the fire occurred. Edison states the fire occurred under extremely windy conditions and therefore, it probably would have occurred even if the tree had

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been properly trimmed (i.e., even if there had been an 18-inch clearance.) Edison also believed that the property owner's failure to grant Edison permission to remove the tree excused Edison's compliance with Rule 35 based on exception 2 to that rule.<sup>1</sup>

#### **3. August 4, 2000 – Inglewood**

A service drop conductor with deteriorated covering came in contact with the metal roof of an apartment building, causing a fire. The fire caused about \$2,500 damage to a small portion of the roof of the apartment building. CPSD found that the service drop covering had deteriorated as a result of a long and continuous contact with a palm tree. CPSD also found that Edison completed a detailed inspection (which it also considers its annual circuit patrol) on July 27, 2000 but failed to record or correct the problem. CPSD alleges Edison violated GO 165, Section IV, which requires facilities be inspected to insure reliable, high-quality, and safe operation. CPSD also alleges Edison violated GO 165 for exceeding the maximum one-year period between annual patrols.

Edison acknowledges that its inspector should have discovered the service drop was rubbing against the apartment building roof during the detail inspection, but states that human error caused the oversight. Edison believes its

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<sup>1</sup> The second exception to Rule 35 states: "Rule 35 requirements do not apply where the utility has made a 'good faith' effort to obtain permission to trim or remove vegetation but permission was refused or unobtainable. A 'good faith' effort shall consist of current documentation of a minimum of an attempted personal contact and a written communication, including documentation of mailing or delivery. However, this does not preclude other action or actions demonstrating 'good faith.' If permission to trim or remove vegetation is unobtainable and requirements of exception 2 are met, the utility is not compelled to comply with the requirements of exception 1."

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circuit patrols were timely according to GO 165 because one occurred annually (i.e., in April 1999 and July 2000).

**(END OF APPENDIX B)**